

Tips for a Successful Last Day of the Regatta – by Jeff Johnson

A forgettable last day of a regatta can be swamped with debates about ‘another race’, bottle necks at the dock, and forever arguments in the protest room that spoil the memory of even the best regattas. These 7 tips give some special consideration to standard RC practices on the water and shoreside preparations that can help prevent a ‘forgettable last day’.

#1 tip – From the beginning... you need to include in your Notice of Race RRS Appendix J1.3 (7)...” *the time after which no warning signal will be made on the last scheduled day of racing;*”

Consider the length of last race from start time to last finisher + time to shepherd ALL competitors to the dock, + realistic time for all boats to get out of the water (multiple ramps or one hoist?). Determine the time you would LIKE to handout awards, and subtract all your calculations.

#2 tip - Behavior counts... On the last day, take the extra moment to set a fair line to make sure competitors aren’t tempted to push the line for an unfair advantage. Unless you know the class desires something more aggressive (ask or read class guidelines), generally start with the P flag. With a good line, you can confidently elevate to a minimum Z flag penalty. That will usually resonate with the fleet. Some classes advocate for a more severe U flag or dreaded Black Flag. For sure, talk to the class and see what they prefer.

#3 tip – Make it clean... Have a solid process for administering the starting line. Restarts or OCS arguments in the protest room are especially aggravating at the end of the regatta, and made worse by poor RC work. Communicating to the fleet (VHF or loud hail) prior to the start, especially if there is a penalty flag in effect, is a best practice and a great way to set the tone. Solid documentation of the start ‘evolution’ in the last minute (video or voice recorded notes along with written notes) is also a huge time saver. It is becoming a best practice to make your recordings available for competitors to listen to / review once ashore. Most competitors skip the protest room after reviewing. AND, call only what you can see. No guessing.

#4 tip – We’re all in this together... Coordinate different courses so fleets return to dock facilities in waves and avoid bottlenecks at the dock or hoist. If you can source extra help in the boat park, it puts a silver lining on the reputation of your event when volunteers are available to help shuttle dollies or trailers for the competitors, run hoist buttons, grab the hose (or mange the hose to cut wait time or excessive washing...that happens) and otherwise be helpful in moving everyone along the ‘disassembly line’.

#5 tip – Why wait... Keep score either on the RC boat (laptop or tablet with web access or updates thru cellular wifi connection) or by texting pictures of finish sheets to a central score person ashore to process with land-based connectivity. Use the ‘commute’ time during transit back to dock to review records or prepare docking time, RC actions, etc. Alternately, you can put the RC person with the scoring laptop on a markboat for a speedy ride to shore to begin getting scores/awards/postings in order.

#6 tip – Here comes the Judge... Have US Sailing judges on the water patrolling the starts and mark roundings will go a LONG WAY in keeping protests from ever getting out of hand. Modify your SIs to require boats to report to the RC their intent to protest immediately after finishing (minimizes hindsight protests) and let the jury know on the way in how many reported. For larger events, arrange for multiple protest committees to be seated and ready to start as soon as the competitors hit the shore. Consider arbitration (App T) to shorten hearings. Set up the jury table (for filing) close by the boat park rather than off in a remote office. Ask for text numbers to notify competitors of the hearing so they can keep putting their boat away. If there is a lengthy hearing, consider not holding the whole event hostage and awarding what you can ‘on schedule’. Apologize to those that are left hanging, but better a few than many.

#7 tip – Plan the chaos... If planning a formal awards ceremony add extra time to #1 tip for competitors to clean themselves up. On the other hand, if you want a fast exit, mindful of long drives or flights to catch, bring the awards to the boat park. Bring a snack table too! It will pay dividends as sailors ‘leave earlier than expected’ with something to eat as well! This might even create more participation as sailors stow their boats and gear. The time gains will get competitors on the road sooner, likely thinking ...”That worked out really well!”