



Couta Boat Race Management Policies – 2021/22

This document describes how the Race Committee (RC) will behave when conducting Aggregate Couta Boat racing at SSCBC.

These policies have been developed in accordance with the Racing Rules of Sailing, Australian Sailing guidance, Couta Boat Association Class Rules and SSCBC safety protocols. They are informed by the World Sailing Race Management Policies, although these have been relaxed in some areas to accommodate the expectations of club racing.

These policies have been developed to guide a consistent approach to race management for the Couta Boat fleet. Nothing in these policies, however, is intended to restrict the RC from exercising judgement in the context of the prevailing conditions. The nature of passage races in particular is likely to necessitate a departure from these policies.

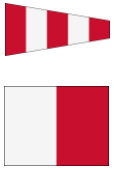
It should be noted that these policies are guidelines to the RC. Failure to observe these guidelines are not grounds for redress.

1. Communications

- 1.1. It is a competitor's responsibility to check for Notices on the [Official Notice Board](#) and Signals on flagpoles. Sailing Operations will, however, supplement these forms of communications with WhatsApp messages and on occasions e-tidings articles. Courtesy PA announcements may be made when a Notice has been posted or a Signal displayed.
- 1.2. On the water, in addition to race signals displayed on RC Vessels, the RC will broadcast on VHF Ch 73 information relevant for the conduct of racing or of interest to supporters.

2. Adverse Weather Forecast

- 2.1. The RC will attempt to ensure that racing is conducted within safe wind limits. It is each boat's sole decision to race (Rule 3) and the person in charge is responsible for determining whether the boat and crew are fit to face the expected conditions (Australian Sailing Special Regulations 1.02)
- 2.2. Nothing in this guideline diminishes or changes the ability of the RC to shorten course, postpone or abandon racing.
- 2.3. The RC may, after taking into account predicted weather conditions, amend the timing and/or locations of a race.
- 2.4. If a weather forecast includes a Strong Wind Warning (or higher) for Port Philip, the RC will consider the relationships between the forecast, wind models, and observations and assess whether the warning conditions are likely to impact local racing.
- 2.5. If the weather forecast indicates it is unlikely that racing will be possible on an upcoming day (too much or too little wind) the schedule may be changed to sail more races in a day or postpone a future day of racing. Often the weather model updates and the 16:45 forecast update will mean that decisions on convincingly unsuitable weather may be made and announced by 18:00 the day before.



3. Postponing

- 3.1. The RC will postpone ashore or send competitors ashore (AP/H) if current weather conditions that are not suitable for racing are likely to continue.
- 3.2. In considering how long to postpone a start, the RC will consider the following;
 - (a) How late a race can be started and still be expected to finish and for all boats to return to their moorings within daylight,
 - (b) The impact on family commitments of late finishes,
 - (c) The effect of long postponements on the water – three hours waiting for a start is probably the limit

4. Times and Timing

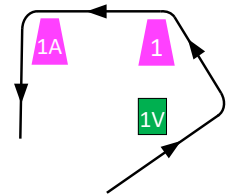
- 4.1. Times will be UTC taken from a GPS instrument.
- 4.2. Starts will not be delayed for boats to reach the race area if they could have arrived with reasonable diligence.
- 4.3. To alert boats that a race or sequence of races will start soon, the orange starting line Flag will be displayed (with one sound signal) five minutes before a Warning Signal is displayed.

5. Decision to Commence Racing

- 5.1. The race will be started at the scheduled time if the wind conditions are within the parameters outlined in paragraphs 5.4 and 5.5. Waiting for ‘better’ conditions may be unfair and will be avoided.
- 5.2. The RC will not wait for the wind to ‘stabilize’. Competitors can compete in shifty conditions.
- 5.3. The start may be postponed if a major wind shift is expected based on a known pattern or other reliable information (*e.g.* new breeze can be seen in the distance and is expected to fill in). Otherwise, the RC will start the race. The wind shift may not occur, the course can be corrected, or the shift may occur after the race is completed.
- 5.4. Races will not be started unless there is sufficient wind for the course to be sailable. The strength and direction of the tidal stream will influence the assessment of what constitutes sailable wind.
- 5.5. Races will not be started in more than an average of 22 knots. This upper limit may be varied depending upon sea conditions, current, rapid changes in velocity and racing location (North Westerly and Westerly breezes in particular). See paragraph 10.3.
- 5.6. When racing back to back, the interval between the finish line closure and the new warning signal for that division will not be less than 5 minutes. This may be varied according to conditions.

6. Courses

- 6.1. The RC will attempt to set the longest possible first leg within the constraints of the course area and the target time.
- 6.2. The course length will be laid to give the first boat of each division the best chance of achieving the target time.
- 6.3. When the current is setting across the course, the RC will generally give preference to a course axis which provides a squarer windward leg.
- 6.4. Gates will be approximately 60 metres (8 hull lengths) wide, laid square to the sailing wind. Variations in width and angle may be appropriate to adjust for current or other prevailing conditions.
- 6.5. A Vertical Hitch Mark 1V may be laid 50m downwind from Mark 1 on to discourage boats entering the zone on port tack. This mark will be in addition to the offset mark 1A, and must also be left to port. If a change of course requires that Mark 1 is moved, either or both of Marks 1A and 1V may not be relaid.
- 6.6. The RC may mark or otherwise indicate the location and extent of shallow water in the race area.



7. Target Times

- ~~7.1.~~ The target time for a single aggregate race will be 90 minutes.
- 7.2. Multiple races in sessions and pursuit races may have shorter target times – around 60 minutes.
- 7.3. Shorter races (30-40 mins) may be conducted if there has been a delay in racing or there are concerns about weather changes.

8. Starting Line

- 8.1. Windward starting lines will be laid square to the median sailing wind. Favoured side of the course, expected wind shifts and other variables may justify variation from this guideline.
- 8.2. The starting line length = number of boats x boat length x 2.5. This may be increased in heavy weather. When Division 1 and 2 are both sailing, the start line length will be set for the larger division – it will not be altered between starts unless there is a gap between starts.
- 8.3. When there is a gate mark directly above the starting line it will be laid approximately 0.05 nm above the starting line. Either or both of these gate marks may not be laid until after the start.



9. Starting Procedures

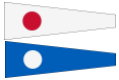
- 9.1. The orange starting line Flag will be displayed (with one sound signal) five minutes before a Warning Signal is displayed.
- 9.2. The courses to be sailed by each division and approximate bearing to the first mark will be broadcast on VHF when the Orange Flag is displayed.



The courses to be sailed, and the bearing to the first mark, will also be displayed on a board on the stern of the start vessel.

9.3. The Rule 26 five minute start sequence will be used. A five second countdown will be broadcast on VHF for the Orange Flag, Warning and Preparatory signals.

9.4. The Orange Flag will be removed (with no sound signal) four minutes after the starting signal unless the RC intends to make the warning signal for the next division to start within ten minutes of the previous start.



9.5. Except for passage races, Division 1 will start first. The Warning Signal for Division 2 will be displayed at the Division 1 Starting Signal.

Starting Penalties.



9.6. Flag P will be used as the Preparatory Signal for the first start attempt.

9.7. In the event the start has been Postponed, or a General Recall has been caused by the length or angle of the starting line, the RC will adjust the starting line and make another attempt using the same Preparatory Signal.



9.8. If there is a Postponement or General Recall, and the RC is satisfied that the line was fair, then the next start will use Flag U (Rule 30.3).



9.9. If the RC is satisfied that a General Recall was not the result of their action, the Black Flag (Rule 30.4) will be used for each subsequent attempt.

9.10. An important principle followed by the RC is that the black flag will only be used when General Recalls are caused by the boats themselves, or rapid oscillations of the wind, and not by actions of the RC. N.b. that the tide setting across the line is not an action of the RC.



Postponing a Race during the Starting Sequence.

9.11. The RC will make every effort to signal a Postponement before the start in the event of any problems with the starting line, especially if starting under a black flag or if there is a heightened safety risk.

9.12. The RC will consider postponing the start for any of the following reasons:

- (a) if the mean wind shifts more than 20 degrees or other influences cause boats to bunch at one end of the start line. In rapid oscillations, the RC will endeavour to lay a starting line based on the mean oscillations expected;
- (b) a drifting mark,
- (c) a significant error in the timing of signals;
- (d) other boats interfering with the competing boats;
- (e) any incidents which cause a safety issue;
- (f) inappropriate starting line length or angle;
- (g) the positions boats are taking on the starting line indicate a bias in the minds of the competitors; or
- (h) other factors that might affect the fairness of the race.

9.13. If the RC considers that adjusting the starting line is unlikely to improve the chances of achieving a successful start, then the start will be allowed to continue.

- 9.14. For a postponement that the RC anticipates will be longer than ten minutes, the Orange starting line Flag will be removed (with no sound signal), and then displayed (with one sound signal) five minutes prior to the warning signal.



Individual Recall.

- 9.15. If the RC is satisfied that all boats over the line have been identified under Flag P, an Individual Recall will be signalled by displaying Flag X. This flag will be displayed within five seconds of the starting signal. The RC will consider letting the race continue if a single unidentified boat is OCS, in preference to a General Recall.
- 9.16. In addition to displaying flag X the RC may broadcast on VHF that there are Individual Recalls and state how many boats are identified as OCS, and may provide information identifying those boats. This may take up to a minute or longer after the starting signal.
- 9.17. Flag X will be removed when the last OCS boat has returned to the pre-start side of the line or one of its extensions, or four minutes after the Starting Signal – it will not be ‘dipped’ for individual boats returning.



General Recall.

- 9.18. When the RC is not satisfied that all boats over early (or that have broken Rule 30.3 or 30.4) have been identified, a General Recall will be signalled by displaying Flag 1st Sub. The RC will consider letting the race continue if a single unidentified boat is OCS, in preference to a General Recall
- 9.19. If a material race management error which is likely to affect a boat’s score is discovered after the starting signal (e.g., timing), the RC may abandon the race (by using Flag N with a class flag if appropriate). In these circumstances, the RC will not signal a General Recall.



10. Abandoning a Race

- 10.1. On the first half of the first leg, the RC may abandon a race in the event of a major, persistent, wind shift (more than 30 degrees). After that, the RC will let the race continue if it is able to adjust to the changed conditions.
- 10.2. The RC may abandon the race when a new wind has caused the fleet to invert.
- 10.3. Once a race has been started, the RC will not abandon the race simply because the average wind speed increases beyond the stated limits. The RC will abandon the race if it is unable to safely manage racing.
- 10.4. The RC will endeavour to ensure that other vessels do not interfere with racing. The RC will consider abandoning the race if it determines that an outside influence has made the race unfair.



11. Adjusting the Course to a new Wind or Current

- 11.1. The RC will tolerate significant changes in the speed and/or direction of wind and tide before changing the course, provided the overarching principle of fairness is maintained.
- 11.2. If changed conditions have significantly influenced the fairness of the race, the RC will consider abandoning the race.
- 11.3. The RC will not change the length of legs just to achieve target times unless there has been a significant change in wind strength.



12. Mark Missing

- 12.1. If a mark is missing or out of place during a race, the RC will attempt to replace it in its correct position, substitute it with a replacement mark or substitute it with a vessel displaying Flag M and making repetitive sound signals.



13. Shortening the Course

- 13.1. The RC will favourably consider shortening the course (iaw Rule 32) if changing conditions threaten the achievement of a full race, either through dying wind or for safety reasons with a building breeze. The preference is for a result in a suboptimal race rather than having to abandon in the quest for a 90 minute race.



14. Finishing Procedures

- 14.1. The finish line will be laid before the first boat begins the final leg.
- 14.2. The Blue Flag will be displayed (with no sound signal) as the first boat rounds the last mark and removed upon the earlier of; (i) expiration of the time limit, or (ii) immediately after the last boat finishes.

15. Race Committee Requests for Redress

- 15.1. The RC will consider requesting redress for affected boats if it believes;
- (a) it may have made an error affecting the outcome of the race for which redress may be available, or
 - (b) that a boat's score has been made significantly worse by the actions of an RC vessel

16. Race Committee Protests

- 16.1. Since the primary responsibility for protesting breaches of the Rules rests with competitors, the RC will not normally protest a boat.
- 16.2. The RC may protest a boat in the following circumstances:
- (a) A breach of a sailing instruction that may not be protested by another boat;
 - (b) An apparent breach of good sportsmanship; or
 - (c) Failing to take a penalty after knowingly touching a mark, but not protesting another boat or being protested by another boat



16.3. If the RC believes from its own observations that a boat did not sail the course, it will score the boat NSC without a hearing.

17. Standard and Discretionary Penalties

17.1. SSCBC Sailing Instructions have discretionary penalties for safety and organizational infringements. The rationale for this discretionary power is that a DSQ is viewed by the RC and SSCBC sailors as too harsh for minor breaches.

17.2. Discretionary Penalties are decided by the Protest Committee following a report by a boat that she has broken a rule (RRS 64.6) or a hearing where a boat is found to have breached a rule in accordance with the Standard and Discretionary Penalties guidelines.

17.3. Standard Penalties will be applied by the RC in accordance with the Standard and Discretionary Penalties guidelines.