

Couta Boat Race Management Policies– 2024/25

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 modified 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 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 may supplement these forms of communications with WhatsApp messages and PA announcements.

1.2 On the water, the RC may broadcast on VHF 73 relevant information about the race (e.g. course, bearing, warning signal time).

2. Adverse Weather Forecast

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.



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. When making a decision on 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) Weather conditions and the comfort/safety of all sailors.
- (c) Social impact of on water delays, especially during marquee days such as Lady Skippers, Next Gen etc.



- (d) Importance of the race to the overall calendar (ie. Portsea Cup) and the impact of not getting a race completed.
- (e) Starts will be postponed by no more than 3 hrs, unless the OC issues other instructions prior to the race.

3.3. 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.

4. Decision to Commence Racing

4.1. The RC will not wait for the wind to 'stabilize'. Competitors can compete in shifty conditions.

4.2. 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.

4.3. The race will be started at the scheduled time if the wind conditions are within the parameters outlined below. Waiting for 'better' conditions may be unfair and will be avoided.

4.3.1. Races will not be started in more than a sustained average of 22 knots. This upper average may be varied depending upon sea conditions, current, rapid changes in velocity and racing location (North Westerly and Westerly breezes in particular). See paragraph 9.3.

4.3.2. 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. Courses

- 5.1. **Tide:** No adjustments are to be made for tide, except in extreme circumstances.
- 5.2. **First Leg:** The RC will attempt to set the longest possible first leg within the constraints of the course area and the target time.
- 5.3. **Div 2 Top Mark:** The Div 2 top mark X1 shall be placed at ca. 80% of the Div 1 course length.
- 5.4. **Horizontal Hitch 1A:** The horizontal hitch – if laid in the case of a Windward Leeward - is a mark of the Div 1 course. It is not a mark of the Div 2 course.
- 5.5. **Depth:** Full plate down water depth in the starting / line up area is much more important than the depth at the edge / corner of a course. The RC may indicate the location and extent of shallow water in the race area.

See below in red the Starting Area Exclusion Zones:



- 5.6. **First Lap:** A triangle is preferred, without a horizontal hitch.
- 5.7. **Gates** will be approximately 60 metres (8 hull lengths) wide, laid square at 90deg to the first leg bearing. Variations in width and angle may be appropriate to adjust for current or other prevailing conditions.
- 5.8. **Bottom marks** will usually be laid 90m (approx.0.5nm) above the starting line and may be laid after the start.

6. Target Times

- 6.1. The target time for a single aggregate race will be at least 90 minutes for the first boat of each Division. Due to the new Div 2 Top Mark and therefore the shorter beat, the same amount of laps may be chosen for both divisions.
- 6.2. Multiple races in sessions may have shorter target times – around 60 minutes.
- 6.3. Shorter races (40-50 mins) may be conducted if there has been a delay in racing or there are concerns about weather changes.

7. Starting Line

- 7.1. Windward starting lines will be laid square to the median sailing wind.
- 7.2. The starting line length is to be 20 meters per boat, (minimum 150m long) or 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.



8. Starting Procedure

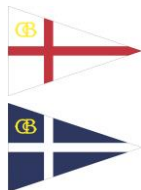
8.1. Starting Sequence

- 8.1.1. Times will be UTC taken from a GPS instrument.
- 8.1.2. Starts will not be delayed for boats to reach the race area if they could have arrived with reasonable diligence.
- 8.1.3. The orange starting line Flag will be displayed (with one sound signal five minutes before a Warning Signal is displayed).
- 8.1.4. 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, may also be displayed on a board on the stern of the start vessel.



8.1.5. 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.

8.1.6. The Orange Flag will be removed (with no sound signal) 10 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.



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

8.1.8. In the case of passage races, there will be a gap of 15 minutes between the Warning Signal of Div 2 and the following Warning Signal of Div 1.

8.2. Starting Penalties



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

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

8.2.3. 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.

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

8.2.5. 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.

8.3. Postponing a Race during the Starting Sequence



8.3.1. The RC will assess the boats lining up to start, if there are difficulties but it's likely the race start will get away, then the start should be attempted and let run.

8.3.2. When the start looks hopelessly flawed, is potentially dangerous and is unlikely to get away cleanly, then every effort to signal a Postponement before the start will be made.

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

- (a) if the mean wind shifts significantly, causing boats to be unable to lay either end of the start line (on each corresponding tack) from the middle of the start line;
- (b) a drifting mark;
- (c) a significant error in the timing of signals;
- (d) other boats interfering with the competing boats;
- (e) other factors that might affect the safety or fairness of the race.

8.3.4. 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.



8.4. Individual Recall

- 8.4.1. 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.
- 8.4.2. 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.
- 8.4.3. 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.



8.5. General Recall

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.



9. **Abandoning a Race**

- 9.1. 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.
- 9.2. The RC may abandon the race when a new wind has caused the fleet to invert.
- 9.3. Once a race has been started, the RC will not abandon the race simply because the sustained average wind speed increases beyond the stated limits. The RC will abandon the race if it is unable to safely manage racing.
- 9.4. 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. **Adjusting the Course to a new Wind or Current**

- 10.1. 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.
- 10.2. If changed conditions have significantly influenced the fairness of the race, the RC will consider abandoning the race.
- 10.3. The RC will not change the length of legs unless it will make a significant improvement to the timing of the race.



11. **Mark Missing**

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.

12. Shortening the Course

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 shorter race rather than having to abandon in the quest for a 90 minute race.

13. Finishing Procedures

13.1. The finish line will be laid before the first boat begins the final leg.

13.2. 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.

14. Race Committee Requests for Redress

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

15. Race Committee Protests

15.1. Since the primary responsibility for protesting breaches of the Rules rests with competitors, the RC will not normally protest a boat.

15.2. 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 or a Race Committee that is a mark and no other boat saw the incident.

15.3. 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.