



OFF SOUNDINGS CLUB

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the Off Soundings Club?

The Off Soundings Club is a yacht racing organization with a membership of approximately 500 experienced racing sailors. Most of the membership is based in Connecticut, Rhode Island, on Long Island, and elsewhere in southern New England and New York State. The club does not operate a shore facility, but concentrates on managing two high-quality weekend race series per year for its members and their invited guests. The historical records of the club are housed in the Blunt Library at Mystic Seaport Museum, which we consider to be our traditional home port.

2. What is the format of the Off Soundings Race Series?

There are two series each season. Each Off Soundings Series consists of a point to point race and an around the buoys race. These Series draw entries from ECSA, NBYA, ELISA, YRA-LIS, NEMA and other sailing associations. Fleets run from 115 to 165 boats sailing in 10 or more classes. The races are scored on the ECSA Offshore Circuit and on the NEMA Racing Schedule.

- The Spring Series is sailed in early June. Traditionally, the Friday race is from Watch Hill, RI to Block Island and the Saturday race is in the vicinity of, often around, the island.
- The Fall Series is sailed in mid-September. The Friday race is usually from New London, CT to a destination on eastern Long Island. On Saturday racing is around the buoys in Gardiner's Bay.

3. Why is participation in Off Soundings Race Series by invitation only?

This is primarily a matter of safety. Given the large fleet sizes, exposed waters, and difficult weather conditions in which the races are often sailed OSC believes that having some knowledge of the experience and competence of entrants is prudent. Therefore, a non-member must be invited as a guest by two club members who are familiar with his experience and abilities.

4. How do I obtain an invitation?

Contact an Off Soundings member and ask him to invite you. Given the size and regional make up of the membership there are members in most area SAs, or contact the Race Secretary for additional information. Persons wishing to sail in a Special Class should contact the Class Liaison. The club also invites participation by boats and cadet crews from military, merchant marine and other maritime academies. School officials should contact the Race Secretary for information.

5. What is a Special Class?

From time to time members request that the club start a Special Class, a group of boats that wish to sail together, such as a particular make, model, or type, or at a level rating. Non-members that qualify for these classes may be invited at the request of the Class Liaison. Currently the only Special Class is for Nonsuch boats. Jack Lombard is the Class Liaison, jackjen784@comcast.net.

6. Can multihulls race in Off Soundings series?

Yes, OSC regularly starts a multihull class and has a standing agreement with the New England Multihull Association (NEMA) that its members may participate in Off Soundings series. Contact the OSC Race Secretary or NEMA for further information.

7. How long is an invitation valid?

An approved invitation is valid for two seasons, i.e., an invitation issued prior to the spring series is valid for four series. An invitation issued in mid-season between series is valid for three series.

8. How do I enter once invited?

Approved guests will receive a Notice of Race package from the Race Secretary by postal mail for each Series during the life of their invitation. Follow the directions to enter using the enclosed Entry Form.

9. How do I continue sailing Off Soundings Series after my invitation expires?

Only one two season invitation is granted per skipper; to continue racing you must become a member of the club.

10. How do I become a member?

If you are a skipper that has never sailed with us the best route is to ask a member to invite you as a guest and sail several series to determine that you are comfortable with the format and conditions, and to meet other members. Your invitation sponsor or another member that knows you and your sailing abilities may propose you for membership and undertake the qualification process. If you are a crew member that has Off Soundings experience, ask your skipper.

11. Why are the Off Soundings entry lead times so long compared to local club races?

Given its large fleets and the likelihood of heavy weather, the Off Soundings Club for safety reasons does not distribute race documents on the water. As the spring and fall series are sailed in different venues with changes in the entry lists, marks and courses, the race documents are different for the two series and must be republished each time. There is an approximate two to three week lead time to complete entries, rationalize handicaps, classify, complete the Final Notice, have it printed, and distribute it by postal mail. That drives the entry schedule. We also post the NOR and Final Notices on the club website on the mailing dates.

12. What handicaps are used?

All monohull classes sail under OSC PHRF handicaps. OSC may make adjustments to the handicaps submitted by entrants. PHRF-ECSA handicaps are accepted as base handicaps as submitted. Boats with other PHRF handicaps or no handicaps must have a valid Off Soundings Data Measurement Certificate and should also submit a current handicap certificate from their local authority if they have one. Multihulls use NEMA PHRF handicaps.

13. What is an Off Soundings Data Measurement Certificate?

It is a certificate of measurement issued by an approved Off Soundings measurer, which contains certain measurement data that the OSC Chief Measurer/Handicapper can use to produce an Off Soundings handicap. A list of approved measurers can be found on the club website. Contact the club Measurer, pauljenningspe@msn.com, with specific questions.

14. Can I obtain an ECSA handicap even though I am from another Sailing Association?

Yes, check the ECSA website, www.ecsa.net, for information. You will have to join ECSA, which you may do even if not a resident of the area, and apply for the handicap on-line.

15. Why might my handicap for the Off Soundings Series be different than my usual handicap?

In the interests of fair racing the OSC Measurer may rationalize your handicap, i.e., adjust it according to OSC and ECSA procedures to produce a handicap that is comparable to the rest of the fleet. For instance, base boat handicaps may vary from one region to another, the maximum size headsail permitted for the base boat may differ, etc. OSC also grants a six second credit for non-spinnaker entrants with roller furling jibs.

16. What prizes are awarded?

Series trophies are awarded for up to four places in each class at the Saturday shore party based on total corrected time with Off Soundings penalty (PE) for the weekend. There are also perpetual trophies for combined one and two year results without PE awarded to members only at the club's annual dinner in April.

17. What is an Off Soundings penalty?

To make the racing more interesting for more people the Off Soundings Club assesses penalties (PE) for success, which are applied against a boat's handicap. The penalty system is detailed in the NOR and Sailing Instructions and has been used successfully for many years.

18. How are Off Soundings races scored for the ECSA Offshore Circuit and the NEMA series?

- ECSA—Each individual race of an OSC series is scored as one ECSA circuit race. Results are recalculated without PE.
- NEMA—Each series is scored as one race. Results are converted by NEMA from Time on Time to Time on Distance.

19. What are my responsibilities as skipper?

Your responsibilities are fully stated in the Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions. In summary, you must be aboard and ensure that your boat is safe and properly equipped and meets government safety equipment requirements, and that your crew is competent and physically fit to race. You are responsible for the safety of the boat and crew, for deciding whether to start or continue racing at any time, and for the conduct of your crew, including prevention of underage alcohol consumption at the shore parties. Guest skippers must be aboard and in command for each race. For members one of the registered Masters must be aboard and in command for each race.

20. Why are the Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions so long?

The *Racing Rules of Sailing* (RRS) require that the Notice of Race provide all of the information necessary to decide to enter a series, to enter, and to plan for participation, and that the Sailing Instructions contain all of the information necessary to sail the races. Therefore, our race documents are thorough and complete. In addition we provide some general information about the venues in the NOR. Although we are ready and willing to communicate with entrants at any time consistent with the Rules and to provide needed information, a thorough reading of the race documents and the RRS should make it possible to enter and sail the races without substantial extraneous communication. Be sure to bring the NOR, the Final Notice, and the RRS with you on race day.

21. Why are there rule changes?

In most cases the rule changes are as recommended or required by the RRS to accommodate local practices, conventional handicap racing practices that are not in the rules, and to better manage multi-venue large boat, large fleet, handicap racing.

IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION THAT'S NOT ANSWERED HERE CONTACT THE OSC WEBMASTER.

oscwebmaster@gmail.com.

You will receive an individual reply and if your question is of general interest it will be added to the FAQ list.