

Sportsmanship Seminar – Inland Lake Yachting Association

October 28, 2017

Commodore David Porter led discussion. The ILYA leadership has a sense we are changing in our on-water compliance with the rules after numerous comments in a single season. The impetus of this discussion came from the Optimist Championships where our Chief Judge observed eight boats hit the windward mark with no attempt at penalty turns. In the same year, race committee observed an increase in adult fleet infractions at windward and leeward marks without penalty turns. Youth comments were made about the aggressive nature of adult scow sailing and the infraction of rules at the top of the adult fleet without correction. These comments led to an agreement at the ILYA Championships that some discussion was warranted to determine if action was needed and, if so, how to teach, encourage and restore Corinthian sailing.

Thirty-one participants attended the three-hour session October 28th with ten lakes represented: Beulah, Geneva, Delavan, White Bear, Pewaukee, Pine, Cedar, Nagawicka, Oshkosh, Okauchee. The crowd attending was balanced in terms of interest as noted below in the first discussion area. The comments below are a topical organization of the comments presented by the participants; hence, conflicting comments may be recorded in a section.

1 - Do we have a problem?

The following comments were related identifying a sense of real change – a decline – in our ILYA adherence to a sense of fair sailing.

1.1 – **Judges' view** Optimists –Eight boats were observed hitting windward marks. Since the Optimist fleet had chosen to not implement on the water judging this season, the judges spoke with instructors and parents after the first race with only one resulting RAF (retiring after finish). Judge states that his expectation was voluntary RAF and he felt disappointment that neither coaches nor parents felt this was the proper course of action. Judge noted this level of non-compliance is not seen in other areas of the nation. They are doing circles in other places of the nation. Why the increase in infraction and why is there no sense of accepting penalty?

1.2 - **RC view** – We do have a problem in the ILYA; especially in youth fleets. Youth seem to have a problem calling out their competitors. Reason? – so much emphasis is on winning-- the gold, only first place. We have forgotten about the process, about improving, about climbing in the skill of sailing. The ultimate expectation has formerly been respecting the rules. The ILYA has prided itself on following basic principles: sportsmanship (follow the rules and accept the penalties), fair sailing, assisting others. Retiring is part of following the rules when a rule has been broken and no action recently has been taken.

RC noted an increase in sighting both windward and leeward mark rounding infractions in adult fleets. It's as though the three-boat length circle is not understood or comprehended visually. Mark roundings seem not to be governed by the rules or, in other words, the sailor is not thinking firstly of compliance or execution of the rule but rather what place am I in and how do I maintain that at all costs.

1.3 – **Instructors' view** – Rules have not been followed as well as in the past. This starts with knowing the rules – on the part of sailors, parents, coaches. Proper roll tack is important to learn in sailing school but the emphasis also needs to be to teach rules. Perhaps we wait too long to teach rules.

1.4– **Sailors' view** – Folks are hitting boats and waiting to see if right-of-way boat will ask for penalty. This seems to be a change in perspective. Sailors are waiting to be told to act responsibly rather than initiating the correction for a rules infringement. The onus has shifted onto the right-of-way boat.

Protests are decreasing. Sailors are choosing to enjoy the social evening rather than execute a protest. Sailors are making a choice to not expect adherence to the rules. They are “letting their competitors off the hook” due to the time commitment for a protest. Youth sailors don't want to protest for fear of hurting feelings. “These are my friends.” It's here! The declining change in compliance is HERE!! WE need to take action

1.5 - **Parents' view** --Adult fleets (perhaps most notably on home lake sailing) in many situations provide a lack of example to our youth. Adults let every little infraction pass; those issues that are small are just let go. The only time protests are lodged is with a major infraction and then protests get invested with massive emotion.

2 - What caused the problem?

2.1 – **Philosophically**, in all sports there is a sense of winning at all costs. Is sailing feeling this pervading the sport of sailing?

2.2 – **Attitudes** – The ILYA is an association filled with lifetime or life-developing friendships. Both adults and youth don't want to hurt feelings. “We don't want any protests.” We have a tradition that we don't protest, both at home and at regattas. We never protest a sailor on our team when at a regatta.

How did we get here? We are always gentlemanly and we don't protest. This is deeply rooted. This may be part of the problem of today. Was self-policing better in the old days? Why this change in current times?

2.3 –**Knowledge** - At local clubs, folks have not read rules. There is simply a lack of knowledge, which results in infractions. Do clubs have rulebooks available? Do sailing schools teach the writing of protests? All the adults in the room seem to recall sessions in sailing school which were devoted to the protest procedure. With the advent of circles as a penalty, it is not as high on the lesson plan priority list. Sailing schools seem to spend time only on speed of sailing, rigging and strategy.

The advent of asymmetrical spinnakers has changed the angles of sail. Does this affect the execution of the rules?

We have a more varied ability on the water than perhaps other regattas, which might have a qualifying aspect rather than an “open” designation. We have first year youth skippers at age 8 sailing with senior sailors at 16. There is an obvious difference in the understanding and implementation, with differing skill levels.

The same applies to local lakes in terms of skill levels. Each club hopes to have new sailors entering the fleet along with seasoned sailors who are lifelong sailors. The ability to learn the rules for the novice adult is daunting but also impacts the quality of racing.

The aging sailor is a blessing. They keep our clubs healthy. Are there changes in rules execution because of skill ability related to age changes? Or is there generosity expressed toward that sailor which sets a tone for the rest of the fleet?

Do we have more parents who don't know the rules? Is behavior different in sailing families compared to new families to the sport?

2.4 – Inconsistency in the execution of rules --- There are some things that simply are “not what we do” We don't treat the top the same. We allow them to be aggressive at the top. We don't as midlevel sailors, hold the top sailors accountable. We let them off.

Is there a difference in an infraction at the top of the fleet and in mid-fleet? When boats are finishing and an infraction occurs mid-leg, is there a reason for a protest? Shouldn't I just let it go? The foul is just as egregious when in 37th place as in 2nd. All are important.

Do we consider the impact of protesting on what *appears* to be a third uninvolved party? While the two potential protesting boats may agree they don't need to do anything, have we considered a third boat's standing?

2.5 - Education -- Is there a difference in educating youth and adults? Does skill level teaching differ in youth and adults? Does value adherence differ in adults and youth?

The ILYA typically hires younger coaches so the maturity in handling conflicts is weaker. The ability to handle “values education” is perhaps more difficult for younger instructors to handle. Conflict resolution skills are not as practiced. Parental pressure for the younger coach may impact his or her decisions.

Are we paying our instructors based on sailor results? Are we encouraging the wrong values? Are our parents (who are also the sailing school board members) directing results-driven attitudes?

The actual teaching of the protest procedure or rules correction has diminished over time. Sailing schools concentrate on speed or boat handling, strategy on the water. Protest writing or protest defense is not given as much time as in the generation older than our present youth.

Sailing is unique in its self-policing nature. Perhaps we should teach this like soccer. Tripping is not a problem but it is prevalent; it is identified and punished. Is there a reason that most other sports like soccer are umpired? Would on the water refereeing for a year help?

Local clubs' education or sailing school approaches may be inconsistent. It is easy to say sailing school should handle it. Adult compliance is more difficult to control but we need to have parents leading by example. Need dual training – yes, to youth sailing education; but parents who sail need to lead and uphold values

2.6 – Unique conditions in inland lake sailing – Since our lakes are small and geographically irregular, do we have shifting winds which impact the action of boats at marks which is not the same in other areas of the world? In other words, do wind shifts occur more rapidly, finding our sailors in a quicker or more often needing to change position from right-of-way boat to offending boat?

Is there a discrepancy in the abilities in RC which cause our home lakes to see poorly set lines and marks, which affect what might appear to be rules infractions? Do rules change based on conditions? Is that an excuse?

2.7 – Enforcement - Behaving badly works now; there is very little punitive action for bad behavior now. And how bad is it? Can't we live like we are since we sail with our friends?

RC does not act now as a policing force. RC depends on the self-policing nature of the sport. While mark roundings are often identified on rounding cards, RC has relied on competitors to police competitors.

2.8 – **Rules** – Have they changed? Are they looser now? Consequences of Peter's and Buddy's time were to RAF. Now there is a spin. What is the reason for change in penalty? Lesser penalty means less compliance. Has the institution of spins for a rules infraction increased our compliance? Or are we more lax? I can always just shove someone and just do my spins. Penalty of spin may be too light and then we have evolved to the point of the right-of-way boat MUST tell me to do spins. There is a sense that it is easier to hit a mark rather than wait for the starboard parade at a mark. Have the rules changed our behavior?

Even with the change in rules from the scoring penalties to on-the-water turns, fleets are now evolving into a single circle. Sailors want less penalty. Is this good?

3 – How do we address the problem? Implementation of a plan

3.1 - What are the values of the ILYA? ---- We need to honor our remarkable heritage. We have remarkable people in the ILYA. --- If we are breaking rules intentionally that is a real problem. Is this as far as declaring that a Rule 69? That's how strongly we feel about this. Is the infraction of a rule which is not addressed a Rule 69?

3.2 – The enemy is US! We are losing the recreational sailor. Read Cal Ripkin, Nick Hayes. We should worry about retention: make sure it's fun; fair and not winning based. We are losing potential sailors. Sees an ever-escalating issue --- we are not retaining young sailors with our aggressiveness. --- Return to the right values. Go back to a No Tears attitude – it's about fairness, inclusion, enjoyment. Parents are angry over results even at our training events. Strengthen rules but also TEACH.

3.3 – Let's call a spade a spade. Let's address it directly. Stop the race. Talk to instructors. Why is the leadership reticent to stop this?

3.4 - There has been a shift in the culture. We talk about the Inland as a unique organization. We sail against each other; we come in and enjoy each other. To change our culture will take as long as the decline began. We are going to need a commitment throughout the whole organization – in both the youth and adult fleets. Do we want to preserve our culture? We need to tackle in on all fronts. We need leadership from the organization of who we are. Remind us of our values. There are many now who did not grow up in the sport or the Inland – we need to teach them who we are.

3.5 – We need a structure in place to make a change – RC, parents. Let's all make an effort to change – not only RC but also coaches and parents.

3.6 - RC protest on shore is not as effective as sailor to sailor. Can RC proclaim protest from water? Why not? But if whistle is used to identify hit mark, do SIs need to announce intention? Whistles should be executed by a judges' team– RC doesn't need any more to do. Currently, we could all probably agree to whistle by a judge if they see contact or hit mark. This requires more manpower but we should do it.

Whistle discussion – will you know who it applies to? If we use whistles and yellow flag, we would call for contact of boats and contact with mark. Judges will need to decide if we will protest/not protest the contacting boats. Judges will tape record two boats. This calls attention to the competitors; we are not umpiring, not making on the water calls. We all understand the port-starboard incidents we see mid-leg

but calling those does not seem like us right now. We are dissuading bad behavior. Hitting the mark seems to be our primary infraction which brought us here. We all know what we want – IMPLEMENT!

The presence of judges on the water may be enough – whistle or not. They serve as a deterrent on the water. The ILYA wants to shape the behavior, effect a positive change.

Look at source of our problems: –1) ignorance/ understanding of the rules 2) some sailors taking advantage of the rules/competitors. The use of a whistle in the judge’s boat takes care of both. But do it right, with enough lead time. Inform our sailors this will be our practice in 2018. It’s not punitive; it’s teaching fair sailing. Preserve our values.

3.7 - What are solutions? Each club should have an adult rules class. UK sails will offer a rules course

3.8 – At first I thought we did not have a problem. But now I see pumping, hit marks. Could put out ump’s but then we lose us controlling US! Protestors are only looking out for the future of the sport; they are trying to keep this Corinthian, fair and sportsmanlike. How do we change that? Judging could be quicker. Our protests are lengthy in time --- use self-enforcement. Encourage sailors calling to sailors on the water.

3.9 – Own our problem, put it out publicly. Then develop solutions. Commodore of the ILYA needs to take the lead - this is us, this is what happened, we need to change

3.10 - *No Tears, No guns, No protests!* We created this terminology. *More fun and no hassle.* That one belongs to us also. What was viewed as taglines for who we are has evolved into an attitude. It all begins with education

3.11 - This is now at our core – Corinthian values. We are clubs grounded in families, friendships that are intergenerational.

There should be a noticeable difference at each regatta, it should permeate all the ILYA does. Soft goods, SIs NORs. Explain the problem and why it is important. We have fallen off the wagon. We need to be thoughtful and talk about it with our entire organization – all fleets, all clubs.

3.12 - You teach to your children; at the same time you teach to your grandchildren. We are an association that abounds in three and four generation sailors. How you act impacts your grandchildren. They most likely WILL be a part of the ILYA.

3.13 - What standards will we use to say things are better? Can’t improve anything you can’t measure. How do we measure current level of infraction?

3.14 The idea of a protest is intimidating; it should be taught as a normal adjunct to learning rules. There should be more practice at protests which would lessen stress level and change emphasis to learning rather than solely a punitive process.

3.15 – Quick thoughts on solutions

- ILYA should present a suggested curriculum. That’s a committee! Needs to be a campaign.
- Modules – find a leader in each area. Teach what we want, visit our clubs
- Develop a game around the rules.
- Provide the tone and template at club level. We need buy-in. Campaign type leadership at the ILYA level.
- Is arbitration a better way?

- Hold open protests so everyone learns
- Debrief sessions should be added to go along with on the water judging.
- Need some bark, not sure we need a bite yet. This should go to all fleets. First do educational program for two years. Third year, whistle. Use TRAP; Xtreme with whistle. Use practice races, which we already have in place for our X and Opti Champs.
- Develop an app. Join the ILYA way of sailing clean; poster of faces of folks who sail the “ILYA way.” Positive examples – parents, instructors, directors, sailors
- For next couple years, put a person on the water whistling at marks
- Team racing may be a way to teach rules.
- Develop a tagline for the year – publish it everywhere: Scowlines each issue in masthead; Scowslants/Scowlines articles; clothing for RC, instructors, youth sailors; own this issue this year
 - Sail Clean
 - See something; say something
 - Just say protest
 - Be cool; follow the rule
 - Honor our heritage
 - Clean & Corinthian – It’s the ILYA
 - Just sail the Inland way
 - Get the flag out – and show ILYA burgee and red flag
 - Think at the mark – it’s not where you are but WHO YOU ARE

4 – Next Steps

100% of those in attendance think we need to change things. Our next step will be to publish the proceedings of this meeting. A subgroup of six to eight will be chosen to reconvene to determine implementation methods. We need to measure so tools will be developed.

Expectation is clean sailing at all levels. ILYA sets the standard. Clubs/sailors/parents/coaches/race committee/judges need to buy in and carry out the expectations. Competitors, parents – all need to meet our standard or expectations. This is who we are and this is what we do. There should be an attitude of collaboration on water – we need to work together. We all need to blend together to meet our expectations. Work together to meet compliance. All of us work together to maintain the standard. -
 -- Self policing on shore and water. Encourage each other. We are the ILYA!