

**Events Committee Meeting  
Item 6(a)ii - Review of the 2012 Olympic Sailing Competition**

**1. Introduction**

**1.1.** Events Committee terms of reference state that:

*“Events Committee shall, every four years, at the meeting immediately after the Olympic Games, provide to Council a review of the Olympic Sailing Competition, and identify possible opportunities for change to ISAF’s Olympic strategy, or to Olympic Sailing Events or Equipment”.*

**1.2.** The Events Committee agreed the process for the development of this report at their meeting in May 2012, with Chris Atkins, Chairman of Events Committee, Henri van der Aat (HVA) and Phil Jones (PJ), as members of the Events Committee, invited to coordinate activities and any members of the Events Committee involved in the Olympic Regatta invited to contribute.

**1.3.** Accreditation providing full access to all areas could not be facilitated for HVA or PJ, meaning that access to key areas and personnel was limited. HVA could not attend the event due to a late business obligation, and PJ only had guest access, with very restricted access, for the second week. Some comments in the following report are inevitably limited as a result.

**1.4.** As well as the items to be considered, which form the headings of this report, the Events Committee agreed the following:

- The group should seek out and include the views of sailors, coaches, ISAF TDs and Race Officials, MNA representatives, spectators, IOC, OBS, other media, LOCOG and ROCOG in its review.
- The review should identify options for change to ISAF’s Olympic strategy, Events and Equipment for 2020, as well as identifying areas for “no change” including possible Core Events and Equipment for 2020.
- The review should also include where appropriate comments on any outstanding Equipment, format and sports presentation decisions for 2016.

**2. Summary**

**2.1.** Overall the 2012 Olympic Sailing Competition (2012 OSC) was an outstanding success. It met ISAF’s strategy, specified in Regulation 23.1.1, of showcasing extremely well the competitive sport of sailing, and elite sailors, to the global media and live and television audiences, and Rob Andrews and his team from LOCOG are to be congratulated on a great event. The look of the boats, and the flags on the sails, were a major step forward from previous Olympics.

**2.2.** The 10 Gold Medals were shared across 7 nations from 3 continents. Overall 15 nations from 4 continents won medals, with Cyprus winning its first Olympic medal in any sport since independence. Ticketed areas were sold out, and sailors enjoyed for the first time competing and celebrating in front of live, cheering spectators. Gold medals in the Finn and the Star were only decided in the last minute of the Medal Race. Winds were generally good. The weather only caused the loss of one day’s racing, delaying the 470 Men Medal Race by a day and causing the cancellation of the Women’s Match Racing 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> sail-off.

- 2.3. This report, by definition, looks at areas where improvement can be made. This is not to detract in any way from the delivery of the 2012 OSC, which was probably the best held to date.

### **3. Quality of competition for sailors**

- 3.1. Objective feedback from the athletes and coaches was difficult to obtain. The prevailing conditions were generally good for sailing during the 2012 OSC and the competition appeared fair, especially on the courses in the Portland Harbour and in Weymouth Bay. The waves and tide made for challenging conditions that seemed to be appreciated by the athletes.
- 3.2. The prevailing moderate to fresh west to south-westerly air flow dominated for the majority of the 2012 OSC and meant the racing conditions on the Nothe Course were generally good, albeit shifty. The situation could have been very different had the wind blown from the other directions. Other than at venues where conditions are very predictable, this is likely to remain an issue when establishing a suitable 'stadium' course at future Olympic Sailing Competitions, including Rio in 2016. Stadium courses should be located where wind conditions can be expected to provide fair racing.
- 3.3. The detailed local weather forecasts were of high value for regatta management when planning the schedule for the day, and for race teams when setting courses and starting races on the water.
- 3.4. Whilst media coverage was extensive, with live television from at least one course everyday, this did not appear to impact the quality of competition. That said, on board cameras had to be removed from the Stars and 49ers early in the 2012 OSC due to concerns over sheets being caught up on them during racing. This was an opportunity lost and must be addressed by earlier engagement with the Olympic broadcaster, and proper 'rehearsals' using the same equipment, preferably as part of the ISAF Sailing World Cup.
- 3.5. There is current a 'risk and reward' assessment to be made with regard to use of on board cameras. Olympic boats should ideally be designed with housings for on board cameras and tracking units, so reducing the risk of these interfering with the competition in any way.

### **4. Duration of regatta and of individual Events**

- 4.1. The Regatta is simply too long. This makes the costs much higher than necessary, with personnel in all functional areas having to be accommodated, and in many cases paid, for more days than necessary. The Women's Match Racing provided the most extreme example where, during the round robin crews were sailing just two flights of 15 to 20 minutes each day for the first six days of their event, an event that lasted for 12 days. Only the team knockout sports of football, volleyball, basketball and handball, and boxing were scheduled across more days on the Olympic Program.
- 4.2. Equally, each individual event is too long. Before the introduction of shorter races, it was common to sail one longer race each day for six or seven days. At the 2012 OSC, 10 races were sailed over five days, often with two spare days, prior to the Medal Race. It is surely not necessary to hold 10 races before moving the next stage of the competition. By the time you got to the end, you simply can't remember what happened at the beginning!
- 4.3. Whilst the Medal Race worked for some events, it was, by comparison, a failure for others. The Laser Radial Medal Race was a classic with any one of four athletes in the mix. By contrast, the Men's RS:X and 49er events had been won before the Medal Race took place.

- 4.4. Also, the skills of match racing an opponent to the back of the fleet to secure a medal are a complete mystery to all but the racing sailor. Any format should encourage sailors to go out and sail to win races.
- 4.5. The Olympic Regatta, and each Event within it, should build towards a climax. Never was this more apparent than in Weymouth. That said, we must recognise and allow for the fact that we are reliant on wind to make our sport exciting (and indeed for it to happen at all on some days!). The development of any format has to take this into account as a priority.
- 4.6. The 2012 OSC also provided a sufficiently fair test for sailors to encourage the world's best sailors to dedicate a four-year campaign to achieve their goal. This is clearly recognised elsewhere in sailing, as it is Olympic medallists who are thereafter in demand and able to go on to Volvo Ocean Race, Americas Cup racing and other similar competitions. Any future change in format should preserve the pinnacle stature that Olympic success currently commands.

## **5. Analysis of attractiveness and effectiveness of the various Events and Equipment**

- 5.1. This is perhaps the most subjective aspect of this report. All Events and Equipment provided a good test of the sailor, demanding athleticism to differing degrees, and with differentiation between Events being on a par with differentiation in rowing or canoeing.
- 5.2. The Laser and Laser Radial fleets in particular allowed a large number of nations to take part, without there being an 'extended tail' at the back of the fleet. The authors believe the Laser Event, with 48 competitors, may have been the single Olympic event that attracted most nations, helping to make competing in Olympic sailing a realistic aspiration for many nations.
- 5.3. The Olympics should be a test of athlete more than equipment. Whilst sailing is an equipment sport, efforts should continue to keep Olympic campaign costs under control, and to reduce the need for expensive equipment and development to achieve Olympic performance.
- 5.4. Reviewing the television coverage and looking at the 'attractiveness' of the different events and equipment, the multi-handed boats generally 'score higher' than the single-handed boats.
- 5.5. Of the single-handed boats, it was not necessarily those that were the fastest that provided the most interesting competition to watch. As example, the RS:X looked spectacular when sailing, but the competition was probably the hardest of all to follow. The Laser, Laser Radial and Finn, whilst slower and less dynamic to watch, did generate some very interesting and entertaining coverage.
- 5.6. These differences were less marked with the multi-handed boats. Generally the 49er produced the most spectacular coverage, especially at the lower wind range, but the other classes were no less impressive at the upper end.
- 5.7. As expected, the Women's Match Racing provided a good climax in the strongest winds of the 2012 OSC, and some good matches in the earlier rounds. However, interest was limited until the event reached the quarter-final stage.
- 5.8. Overall the 2012 OSC showed that a shorter regatta, moderate to strong winds, and good sunshine, are probably more important to attractiveness of the OSC than any differences between Events.

## **6. Suitability of fleet sizes, course areas, courses and race durations**

- 6.1.** It is clear that some course configurations are well suited to some boats and not others. Generally the windward/leeward course seemed to suit most of the classes sailed at the regatta. This is not to say that this course should be used exclusively. Also, some variations including leeward, centre and windward gates warrant experimentation, as does starting and/or finishing to windward or leeward, especially when these would provide a better spectator experience without compromising the sailing test.
- 6.2.** There was considerable push back to the use of the windward finish at the 2012 OSC, despite this being an option that had been previously agreed. Increasingly athletes (or the coaches of the athletes) seem to wish to spend time only on practising for things that will happen during the OSC. Thus all courses to be used, or that are likely to be used, in the Olympic Competition should be planned and tested at the Sailing World Cup and any test events.
- 6.3.** Fleets of similar sizes should share courses where possible. This reduces the need to change start line length and relay courses. This in turn reduces the time between starts and allows for a more compact program.
- 6.4.** Target course times were met with good precision by all race teams at 2012 OSC. The 30-minute Medal Race time seemed appropriate, although shorter races could be considered if more than one race was sailed as part of the 'final'. The longer races appeared to have very little place changing towards the end and could be reduced in time if this would help the overall scheduling of the regatta.
- 6.5.** The smaller fleet sizes are less likely to have general recalls, and this is advantageous for races in front of spectators, and for televised races.
- 6.6.** The rotation of Events to different course areas was a success. As a principle, athletes in every Event should have the opportunity to race where their final race or series is to be held, before the final race or series takes place. This requires careful planning and cooperation between the core strategic team that should include the Meteorologist, Technical Delegate(s), Principal Race Officer, the TV Producer and Field of Play Manager.

## **7. Other obligations put on sailors**

- 7.1.** There is no feedback that any of the other obligations placed on sailors was unreasonable. It is noted that mixed zone, through which all athletes were required to pass, was a popular feature, but athletes should continue to be allowed to make their own decisions as to whether they talk to the media. It would be helpful, both for sailors and media, to introduce such a mixed zone, and to adopt the 'Athlete Media Guidelines', at other ISAF Events.
- 7.2.** Medal Race sailors were asked to sail in front of the spectators before the Medal Race, and then for the three Medallists to sail in front of the spectators after the race. In practice most sailors wanted to 'join in the fun' and celebrate in front of the spectators after the Medal Race. This concentration of sailors provided the media with their best close-up shots of sailors and it was typically the images from these celebrations that were published worldwide at the end of the day.
- 7.3.** ISAF and ROCOG should review how to maximise the final race spectator and media opportunity, plan the final day racing schedule to take account of it, and update the Athlete and Media Boat Guidelines accordingly.

## **8. Shore facilities for sailors and race officials**

- 8.1.** The shore facilities generally appeared good, although the author had no access and is only working on feedback provided through interaction with those that did.

## **9. Quality of technology and presentation of the sport: spectators; TV; other media**

- 9.1.** There was a considerable effort made in applying national flags and athlete's names on mainsails and national flags on all spinnakers, coupled with the 'London 2012' look, making for far easier recognition and somehow making the boats more 'personal'. It is noted that a company was contracted to produce and apply all the decals professionally. This was a very worthwhile investment, with much greater consistency and fewer 'peeling' issues experienced. The improved 'look' also appeared to be appreciated by the athletes and certainly enhanced the television and other media coverage.
- 9.2.** Considerable efforts were also been made on the 'look' of the support boats and personnel afloat. This again enhanced the overall look of the event at the venue and on television.
- 9.3.** By comparison, the container area looked like a temporary market! Either a standard look for containers should be defined, or the containers 'wrapped' during the event in the same way as the boats. As a very basic example, the size of the nations' flags and heights of the flagpoles could all be defined, giving at least some consistency.
- 9.4.** It was very disappointing that, as foreshadowed in May, the tracking output could not be followed on the internet due to unresolved issues with broadcast rights. It is understood that rights holders did have the access to the feed, but it is not known how many, if any, made this feed available on their websites. This situation has remained unchanged for three Olympiads and a renewed effort should be made by ISAF to address it through the IOC before new rights holder agreements are negotiated for future Games.
- 9.5.** The host broadcast pictures were of a good standard, enhanced by the conditions, the 'look' of the boats and the on board vision. These made for fast, exciting racing (see **Quality of competition for Sailors** above). The graphic output from the tracking was not of the highest available quality and, as such, looked average when compared to other sailing events. Only leading technologies should be utilised for the Olympic Competition.
- 9.6.** The results system provided interim mark positions and predicted overall positions for all fleets. This system worked well and allowed the remote viewer to follow the action on the various courses, even when the television signal was not available.
- 9.7.** The combination of live pictures, 3D graphics and interim positions to tell the story of the competition was generally not achieved in the broadcast coverage seen by the authors. More effort needs to be made on the presentation if the viewer is to be more fully engaged. The suggestion of a course or workshop for the development sailing commentators has considerable appeal and is something that ISAF should pursue. It would also be better for rights-holders if the OBS output were not so 'raw' and could have some tracking images integrated.
- 9.8.** On water, the media, TV, spectator and other boats appeared well briefed and there were no reports of interference with the competition. LOCOG developed a Media, Marshall and Spectator Boat Guidelines document, and gave daily briefings to all drivers and on-the-water media, and this policy should be adopted at future Olympic regattas. Certainly there should be no relaxation of the requirements for these boats and the transfer of knowledge to the Rio

Organising Committee is a key issue. ISAF should continue to investigate innovative ways of capturing images, including the use of drone helicopters that are less expensive and cause less interference.

**9.9.** The Nothe spectator area was a great success. It was not part of the original requirement agreed with LOCOG. Despite this, most of the challenges were overcome and the experience was at least equivalent to that enjoyed by spectators at other Olympic venues. Spectator satisfaction data has been collected but has not yet been published. The venue benefitted from:

- Big screens with both 'host broadcaster' and 'on site' 'feeds
- Commentary from both on the water and in the venue
- Guest appearances from medal winners as they became available
- Pre and post race interviews with athletes and coaches

**9.10.** Sailing can learn from other sports how to better engage the live audience, something that is pleasing become more of a feature at sailing events. Also the presence of a live audience is an essential aspect of good broadcast coverage. The coverage of the competition, and especially the Medal Races, had 'atmosphere' as a result.

**9.11.** Whilst the figures for broadcast television from the 2012 OSC are not yet available, they are unlikely to be significantly better than those from previous events. Although there is scope for improvement, our sport now has coverage of Olympic sailing that we can take to broadcasters and to which we can expect a reasonable response. Now we have a product, it is important that ISAF engages with the broadcasters to seek feedback and secure interest.

**9.12.** The only major issue in relation to the spectator experience was the fact the Medal Ceremonies, originally planned for the Nothe (and included on the tickets), were eventually held at the Olympic Regatta Venue. Only those with accreditation could gain access. Special arrangements were made for a limited number of friends and family to attend.

**9.13.** The situation devalued the experience for the athletes and was a source of considerable frustration for friends and families and some of the spectators. It was a significant issue and a major opportunity lost. The Medal Ceremonies must take place in front of the live audience, immediately after the final race.

## **10. Any cost-related observations resulting in recommendations**

**10.1.** Many of the observations above address the costs of staging the Olympic Sailing Regatta. Areas to be addressed should include:

- A reduction in the length of the Regatta, to a maximum of 9 days in 2016 and possibly 8 days in 2020
- A reduction in the number of International and National Technical Officials required at the Regatta
- Organisation of the schedule to start the classes more extensive measurement later, reducing the time measurers are required prior to the event
- A review of RRS 42 with the aim of limiting the number of classes to which it applies, reducing or removing the need to on water judging

**10.2.** As an example, the number of ITOs, NTOs and SSV (sport-specific volunteers) for Weymouth 2012 totalled 353. This is high given the number of athletes (380) and the duration of the event, and continued efforts should be made to reduce this number without compromising the quality of the regatta.

## **11. Other opportunities to improve event for sailors, media and spectators**

**11.1.** Clearly all requirements must be properly defined in the bid documents. This would seem a key issue for ISAF but the bid document currently receives no exposure to any of the ISAF Committees. It might be that an improved outcome could be achieved if this was the case.

**11.2.** Equally, ISAF is required to provide a report each four years to the IOC, information from which is included in the IOC Program Commission Report. Again, this is a key document and it contains at least a level of subjective opinion that is not discussed within any ISAF Committee. This would seem to be an oversight given the significance of the information provided.

## **12. Recommendation**

**12.1.** It is recommended that the Events Committee adopt this report and that ISAF, and the Technical Delegate in particular, work as appropriate to implement the various recommendations contained to further enhance the Olympic Sailing Competition.