

ISAF 2016 Olympic Kiteboarding Equipment Evaluation Report



Task

The Executive Committee asked the chairman of the Equipment Committee to form a panel to make an evaluation of the most suitable equipment for the Olympic Kiteboard events.

ISAF Reg. 23.1.3(c):

Selection of New Equipment (for both a New or Retained Event)

New Equipment shall only be selected following Equipment trials or other evaluation against the specified criteria, and shall be decided no later than November of the year four years before the Olympic Games.

Evaluation Panel:

Georg Tallberg	EQ, EQCSC and CRSC chair.
Carolijn Brouwer	EQ and EC
Kamen Fillyov	Council, RR and WSKC chair.
Bruno De Wannemaeker	EQ, EQCSC and WSKC
Markus Schwendtner	IKA

Format of Olympic Kiteboarding Course Racing

The equipment evaluation has been based on the format recommendations of the ISAF Santander Kiteboarding Format Trials. The recommended format is “course racing”, even if the competition may be conducted in heats and different shape course. Races will be both upwind and downwind, and therefore the equipment has been recommended to suit such courses. Even if the format would be slalom or marathon, the equipment would be the same. Sailors at the 2012 slalom European and World championships widely used the same equipment that they used in the course racing events. Marathon events use the same equipment as well.

Recommendation

The panel has made an evaluation on the best possible equipment to be chosen for the women’s and men’s Olympic kiteboard events. The main possibilities are to stay with the box rule that the class uses currently, or develop a separate one design class rule.

The evaluation panel is recommending the selection of the IKA “Formula Kite” equipment as equipment for the 2016 Olympic Sailing Regatta and all ISAF graded events. The proposed box rule effectively addresses cost and availability issues and represents the history and philosophy of the discipline of kiteboarding. It is also recommended by the top sailors.

By choosing one design equipment there would be a risk to have an event on the Olympic Sailing Competition that is felt by sailors and general public not being the pinnacle event for this discipline of the sport. Top sailors strongly favour the box rule concept as it allows participants of a wide weight and size range to compete with equal chances. Only the box rule concept ensures participation of the world’s top athletes.

Summary Narrative

There is currently only one class representing course racing kiteboarding. This Kiteboarding Class (International Kiteboarding Association – IKA) has class rules in ISAF standard format. The Class Rules are written as “open” rules and include measurement control on boards. This allows multiple

manufacturers to develop boards within certain maximum and minimum dimensions. Only one board may be registered for an event. Only 3 kites may be registered for an event. The sizes of the kites are free. This enables sailors of a wide variety of sizes to be able to race in a wide variety of wind strengths.

Boards and kites must be production manufactured and registered with the class ahead of event eligibility, in a similar system used since years in certain windsurfing classes, namely Funboard, Formula Windsurfing and Raceboard.

A registration system is already in place and can be seen at the IKA website. One of its main features is that it ensures a fair distribution of board models among MNA's and NCA's. It introduces a yearly registration deadline, and equipment becomes eligible several months later, ensuring enough time for production, distribution and training. The deadlines do consider equipment eligibility with regards to the major ISAF events. The registration system also includes a pre-order system for MNAs at reduced prices. The registration scheme slows down development to the normal product life duration, ensures low prices and world wide availability.

The class rules are controlling the class well. Minor changes proposed put a special emphasis on the maximum and minimum dimensions of the box rule, and allowed materials to be used. The material limitations establish the status quo of current technology and prevent the development of exotic and expensive materials and production methods, while allowing evolution within the box rule. For boards, the limitations are already rather tight. The kites will be limited to the materials currently used. For fins, there is currently no need to change, however the class rules and registration scheme make provision to address the same procedures if it is felt necessary to enforce.

The panel evaluated the two principles against each other – “box rule” vs. “one design”. If one design should be chosen, the panel thinks it would lead to a smaller range of size/weight among the top sailors. The one design class would after some time be slower than the box rule equipment. Top sailors would not be sponsored by a kite brand if the number of brands would be limited. Top sailors would most likely not participate in the Olympics, which would be bad for the sport.

Evaluation against the criteria in regulation 23.1.2

The panel has aimed to compare the Formula Kite with a one design option based on the criteria in ISAF Regulation 23.1.2. A chart providing an overview over the compliance with the criteria set out in regulation 23.1.2 can be found in appendix A

23.1.2 Preamble

The philosophy of the discipline of kiteboard racing is that sailors use their own equipment, provided by various brands. By selecting a box rule, the selected equipment would most likely represent the pinnacle for that discipline of sailing. A one design option could probably not gather all course racing kiteboard sailors and there would be two competing classes.

23.1.2(a) demonstrate the diversity of skills required to race various types of small boats, and minimize the overlap between Events

The overlap between events would be reduced by selecting Formula Kite as these would be the only sailing events not being one design.

23.1.2(b) place an emphasis on athlete skill rather than equipment development, and limit the impact of equipment on performance

One design equipment is believed to put the focus on sailing skills rather than on equipment. This

has a positive impact when considering a group of sailors of similar body physics (weight and stature). If sailors do not comply with the optimum size/weight for the chosen equipment, they are rather disadvantaged by the equipment and their chances to win are low despite of sailing skills. Like windsurfing, kite sailors are not transferring to other classes to find suitable equipment for their weight. This is an additional reason that equipment should enable a wide variety of size and weight of sailors.

23.1.2(c) demand a high level of athletic ability as well as excellent sailing skills

These criteria apply to both box rule and one design equipment, however, constantly evolving equipment (within the natural product life time cycles) is considered to be more rewarding and challenging to sail. These criteria are best met if sailors of different size can be competitive.

23.1.2(d) be attractive and accessible to young athletes from all continents, and of different size and weight, with a clear pathway from ISAF Youth to Olympic Events and Equipment

Evolving equipment representing the current state of technology is considered by the panel to be more attractive to young athletes. Box rule equipment allows competitors of different size and weight to compete with equal chances as sailors can select equipment according to their body physics.

In the 2012 Worlds, on box rule equipment, competitors with a weight band of 70 to 100 kilogram finished among the top six in the men's fleet. In the women's fleet, competitors with a weight band of 55 to 70 kilogram finished among the top 4. In youth competition the weight band is lower, and the equipment can be adjusted to suit lighter sailors.

23.1.2(e) maximize the participation of the world's best sailors and showcase the diversity of the sport

To maximize participation a box rule is seen by the panel as the choice to enable sailors of different weight and size to compete with equal opportunities. The box rule leads to a more effective distribution of equipment and keeps more manufacturers interested developing kiteboarding.

23.1.2(f) provide an effective platform for promotion of the sport, and elite sailors, between Olympics

Currently all kiteboard racing events are conducted on box rule equipment, with world and continental tours in place. Selecting the current "box" rule for the Olympics, consistency between the Olympic pathway and the professional pathway would be ensured.

23.1.2(g) progress towards an equal number of Events for men and women to participate in

Kite boarding is conducted by women and men. It is natural that they have their own racing fleets. On national level and in training the "box" rule will be more equal. There will not be a Radial and a Standard class that performs differently. It will be similar to training in the 470, which clearly supports female participation from emerging nations.

23.1.2(h) avoid unnecessary or excessive equipment costs, development costs, measurement costs, coaching costs, race organization and race official costs, and television and other media costs

Initial equipment costs should be equal for box rule equipment than for one design equipment. Competition between brands has shown in other classes that manufacturer classes are not cheaper and quality is usually worse. The box rule equipment provides opportunity for manufacturing around the world, including developing nations, reducing the cost of production and benefits regions where high import taxes are a problem. The proposed registration scheme for the box rule reduces the amount of model changes to the expected life cycle of the equipment (new evolved equipment becomes available when the former equipment would need to be replaced for performance reasons anyway). Development costs are in the end shared by all customers not only

the olympic sailors and are a small part of the price. Measurement costs for a “one design” rule would be marginally higher, as the control would be stricter than in the box rule. All other costs should be similar for both models.

23.1.2(i) offer continuity of Events and evolution of Equipment to give MNAs and sailors a dependable pathway into Olympic competition with continuity of investment

The equipment for the box rule is available already now, a one design class would need to be started. Equipment for the box rule concept constantly evolves within the natural life duration of equipment, bigger one-time investments as in changing from one type of equipment to another does not happen.

23.1.2.(j) provide suitable Events and Equipment for Regional Games and other regattas

Box rule gives more freedom for sailors to find suitable equipment

23.1.2(k) minimize environmental impact.

Box rule equipment allows for regional builders which minimizes environmental impact of shipping etc.

Sailor Feedback

Current kiteboard sailors have made clear that they want to continue to race on box rule equipment as it allows a wide range of weights and body physics to compete on equal opportunities. They also want to compete on competitive equipment that follows the development of the sport.

Appendix A: Comparison Chart Evaluation against criteria in regulation 23.1.2
++ is most positive, for the type of equipment.

	Box Rule (“Formula Kite”)	“One Design”
Is equipment representing pinnacle of discipline	++	-
Demonstrate diversity of skills.	n/a	n/a
Minimize overlap between events	n/a	n/a
Place emphasis on athlete skill rather than equipment development	+	++
Shall limit the impact of equipment on performance	+	++
Requires high level of athletic ability	++	+
Requires excellent sailing skills	++	+
Attractive and accessible to young athletes from all continents and of different size and weight	++	-
Clear pathway from ISAF youth to Olympic events	+	+
Maximize participation of the world’s best sailors	++	-
Showcase the diversity of the sport	++	+
Provide an effective platform for promotion of the sport, and elite sailors, between Olympics	++	+
Avoid unnecessary or excessive equipment costs	+	+
Development costs	+	++
Measurement costs	++	+
Coaching costs	+	++
Offer continuity of events and evolution of equipment	++	-
Provide suitable events and equipment for regional games and other regattas	++	+
Minimize environmental impact	++	+