

IFDS Coaches Commission, Betsy Alison

The 2010 year was fairly quiet with most of the activity surrounding scheduling of events within the various classes. As Sonar sailors and coaches did in 2009, the three Paralympic classes were encouraged to pick fewer events to attend in order to increase participation at those events. In 2009, the Sonar sailors decided to focus attention on the following events in 2010:

- Rolex Miami OCR, USA;
- Semaine Olympique Française, Hyeres, FRA;
- IFDS Worlds (Medemblik, NED);
- Sail for Gold, Weymouth, GBR.

By consolidating resources on fewer events, the participation was strong: 9 boats RMOCR; 9 boats Hyeres; 19 boats IFDS Worlds; and 10 boats for SFG. This consolidating at events proved to increase the depth of field at the events and has led to the Sailors Council to try to encourage all three fleets to do the same for 2011 and 2012. Participation does not seem to be as much of an issue for the 2.4mR's as they as a class are included at many of the World Cup events, and the fact that the international class itself is very Eurocentric with class events open to both Able-Bodied and Disabled sailors lends itself to higher number of participants. The SKUD18 class has shown lower numbers in 2009 and 2010, mostly due to some teams from 2008 not continuing on and lack of funding for teams to travel and compete. The 2010 IFDS Worlds had 12 teams from 11 countries – the best showing in some time.

There has been interest expressed by several new teams that are forming from ISR and SWE. It is apparent that a strong effort needs to be made to increase participation on an international level by consolidating resources to attend fewer events with more teams attending. In discussions among the coaches at various events, other than participation issues, talk has centred on boat selection for future Games. The consensus seems to be in favour of the 2.4mR and Sonar staying on as the boats of choice. Many countries have invested time and equipment in these classes, and after last year's vote at the AGM, both are secure through 2016. Sailors and countries that are currently in the SKUD18 class who have made the investment in equipment and training seem to like the boat very much. It has been very user friendly for the more "severely disabled" while maintaining a highly technical standard of equipment. There has been a slow but steady build of the SKUD18 class. Little difference has been seen between the new hull versions and the older ones. It appears that several more countries have made the investment in equipment but have yet to fully compete in the boats. Some of the issues surrounding the SKUD18 revolve around equipment availability and cost of equipment, but 2011 should see more boats on the line.

One item that coaches have embraced in 2010 before ISAF World Cup events have been "Coaches' Regattas". These are informal races run primarily by the local Paralympic coaches with the help of visiting coaches. The first Coaches Regatta was run for 2 days prior to Miami OCR for SKUD18's and Sonar's while the 2.4mR's held their Midwinter Championship. There was some racing organized prior to Semaine Olympique Française, Hyeres and also for Sonar's before Sail for Gold, Weymouth. The feedback from sailors was very positive and it encouraged teams to practice actual racing before the main event. Coaches are encouraged to continue to provide this type of "service" to participants at 2011 ISAF World Cup events for the Paralympic Classes. There will be a Coaches Regatta held for SKUD18's and Sonar's in Miami on 21-22 January 2011 just prior to the start of MOCR (23-29 January 2011). 2.4mRs will have their 2011 Midwinter's on 21-22 January 2011.

Though the Coaches Commission was not charged by the IFDS Executive Committee to work on any specific projects in 2010, we stand ready and willing should the need arise. We look forward to a productive and regatta filled 2011.