

Technical Delegates Report

2012 Paralympic Sailing Competition, Weymouth & Portland, GBR

29 August – 6 September 2012

The 2012 Paralympic Sailing Competition, Weymouth & Portland Sailing Academy, GBR was a remarkable and inspiring event. It was a great honour and privilege to be the Technical Delegate and once more I thank the IFDS Executive Committee for intrusting me. I also take this opportunity to thank once more the Assistant Technical Delegate Wilfried Klein and ISAF/IFDS Disabled Sailing Administrator Emma Little for all their valuable help and support, especially for handling the accreditations process.

Pre Games Period

At the Pre Games period between 2009 and the Games I had 8 face to face meetings with the LOCOG team: 2 in London, 5 in Weymouth and 1 during the IFDS Combined World Championships at Port Charlotte and numerous exchanges of emails and phone calls, mainly writing, checking, re-writing and finalising the Notice of Race and the Sailing Instructions, all specific instructions and regulations for Coaches and Athletes, all the necessary Technical Manuals etc. Many thanks to Pete Alam and Sandra Robinson for their cooperation and support during that period.

Although there was no official Test Event, the 2011 IFDS Combined World Championships at Weymouth 1–8 July 2011 was used as Test event. Venue accessibility, Results Procedures, Race Management and Rescue teams were tested. Final decisions were taken concerning the Course Race Officers (NTOs) and racing courses.

In our recommendations to IPC we pointed the importance for IFDS, future Games Organizers and competitors to have an official Test Event at the venue area, prior to the Games and if possible during the same season of the year.

Qualification System & Entries

The qualification system was perfect and appropriate to the principles of qualification for Sailing. It was implemented during two IFDS Combined World Championships in 2010 and 2011.

The NPCs confirmed the use of their qualification slots, except for one, who declined the use of the Two-Person Keelboat Slot

The reallocation of unused slots was then offered to the next qualifying nations in the Two-Person Keelboat. The slot was refused, so two more slots in the One-Person Keelboat were allocated.

All DATA exchanged with LOCOG was handled according to the regulations.

Competition

The level of competition was very high and all top athletes attended the Games.

41 boats from 23 countries competed in the three Paralympic classes. 30 races in total were sailed.

28 Protests were heard by the International Jury. One boat was penalised with a 4 points DPI for not following the Chief Measurers' instructions concerning the repair of the boats hall. The competitors appealed at the CAS.

Two different courses were used: A. Windward – Leeward B. Trapezoid with no problems.

Recommendation for the future: It should always be our objective to have two separate course areas. This would give the flexibility to the race officers to set courses in varying wind conditions without having to move to a new location due to area constraints. We should look for more options for course configurations, as per the ISAF race management manual. This would support better race management and give easier identification for finish positions.

11 races were scheduled according to competitors' needs and requests. Target for this regatta was 9 races over the 6 days; we achieved 10 races due to no wind on day 6.

Recommendations for future Games: Taking in consideration wind conditions and daylight time in Rio, it is suggested that we have a reserved day if the schedule is for 11 races over 6 days of sailing. If this (no wind) happens early in the week and may last for more than 1 day, the schedule of 11 over 6 days is too tight.

There was easy access to the Field of Play as it was very close to the venue.

The tracking system provided was very good but it needs to be interfaced with TV and media. Contrary to the great presentation at the Olympics we couldn't see all races live using superimposed graphics etc. Live coverage would be great for the sport in general.

Competition Management

Preparation of the Games was handled in a high professional manner by LOCOG.

The 2 Race Management Teams had plenty of experience and excellent performance. The boats staff was very well trained and was fully equipped with boats for all marks. Very good Safety Support and Marshalls Boats.

Games Officials and Volunteers

20 ITOs were appointed, 6 more than the 2008 Games: 1 TD and 1 Assistant TD, 7 International Judges, 4 course representatives, 3 International Measurers (equipment inspectors) and 4 Classifiers.

All Games Officials both ITOs and NTOs were of very high standard and very well trained. Their vast experience in officiating was clear and competitors appreciated their generous contribution to the success of the Games.

In order to adhere to the ISAF rules and policies regarding the jury as well as other officials it is important and proposed to increase the number of Judges to 8, which will allow having in the jury panel judges coming from different countries than the parties to a hearing. Also it is strongly recommended adopting the Olympic Games model which would have 5 ISAF Race Appointed persons. This would be made up of 4 ITO,s on the water officiating and 1 ITO (PRO) looking after

the overall regatta and supervising on water activities to ensure consistency over the race courses.

The quality and quantity of the volunteers was the main factor to the success of the Games.

The Venue

The Weymouth and Portland Sailing Academy was the ideal venue for the Sailing Competition.

Very good Marina, pontoons, cranes, boat and equipment parking area, offices etc.

IFDS made a number of inputs concerning accessibility at the venue. Most suggestions were followed to the point.

Comments concerning accessibility

The surface was good to use for wheelchairs.

Visually impaired people may have had problems because there were only very few contrast stripes to find.

Blind people did not find markings to use by white cane.

In the main building the markings were to find in the pathway to the venue. In the venue the markings were missing.

Accessible toilets were not available at the pontoons as requested and the number of accessible toilets at the main building was limited.

Spectators and Paralympic Family Seating

Three boats (one of them was accessible) were at the disposal of the Paralympic Family who could watch racing inside the FOP area.

Unfortunately, as in previous Games, we faced once again the same problem concerning non accredited spectators (parents and friends who are the main supporters of Disabled Sailing). Once more it was impossible for them, being non accredited, to watch the races. Although IFDS had asked and pressed LOCOG it has been impossible, mainly due to strict security measures, to use a ticketed boat that could go outside the restriction zone and give them the possibility to follow the races.

Recommendation: IPC and future Games organisers should review the policy and give to non-accredited persons opportunity to watch the races. This is extremely important for the promotion of our sport.

Accommodation

Accommodation at the Village was very good. Games officials enjoyed staying together at the village with the athletes and to be able to dine and mix with them. Interaction between the ITOs - NTOs/Game Makers/Athletes was excellent.

Broadcasting

IFDS received a number of comments regarding the coverage of the Sailing Events during the Paralympics. It was felt that the coverage was not extensive enough.

Victory Ceremonies

Poor, with extremely small participation of the public due to lack of space and strict security measures. The athletes and visitor's space for wheelchairs was a bit too small. Family members of the athletes must have the opportunity to attend the ceremony. IFDS complained.

Security

Although security measures were very strict and of high level at the Village and the Venue, surprisingly they didn't exist at all on the way between Weymouth and London. Paralympic lane was not existing. Not at all presence of police escort on the way from Weymouth to London and back, not even when a number of coaches were blocked for more than one hour in a tunnel next to the river Thames not far of the Tower Bridge. The trip lasted almost 8 hours and despite the discomfort of the disabled persons, security risk for athletes and officials was extremely high. IFDS strongly complained for this inconvenience.

In conclusion I can only say, what an amazing and inclusive experience, how proud I was to be part of the team. I thank the ITOs and NTOs Volunteers, LOCOG Management team, security staff on land, air and sea and last but not least our incredible Sailors.

The Weymouth & Portland Paralympic Sailing regatta not only was in pursuit of excellence, it was near perfect.

Costas Tsantilis

Technical Delegate, 2012 Paralympic Games

IFDS Vice-President