

Windsurfing Presentation Event – Cadiz

Preliminary Report by the Evaluation Chairman, Rich Jeffries

At the recent ISAF World Championships held at Cadiz, the Windsurfing Evaluation team, members of the Windsurfing Committee, the Chairman of the Sailing Committee and the Chairman of the Events Committee listened to five presentations from members of the Windsurfing Industry.

The criteria for the event were divided into three areas of concern;

The Concept; including sail sizes, the manufacturing processes and safety features of the equipment.

The Class structure; including Youth development, measurement and class rules and their role alongside ISAF.

The Marketing proposal; the licensing agreements, if the class is a one-design or open class and whether it involved a single manufacturer or a multi-manufactured programme.

The event was split up into two areas of evaluation. The first area was a series of one on one meeting's with each manufacturer. Here, each had the opportunity to discuss its proposals with the ISAF Evaluation team and to answer any technical questions and queries.

The second area was a series of public demonstrations where manufacturers were given the opportunity to present their equipment to the public in an effort to persuade sailors to try the equipment and to provide thoughts and feedback, both to the manufacturer and the Evaluation team. Manufacturers were also given the opportunity to present their proposals in the evening with presentations to the public, where again feedback both to the manufacturer and the Evaluation team was given.

Presentations

Boards and More – Juergen May and Ivor Hopkins

United Strength was the message coming from Boards and More with the whole group of companies behind Boards and More including Fanatic, F2, North Sails and Arrows as well as Mistral being involved and behind the project.

The theme for the proposal revolved around "Evolution not Revolution".

Boards and More came forward with two proposals, the current Mistral one design and the Mistral Prodigy. Each would be modified from their current configurations with significant technological advances including nose stringer, which combined with a new sandwich lay-up, makes for a lighter and stiffer board. Other advances include a longer centreboard and fin which would be built using more sophisticated technology.

North Sails and Viper have introduced new sails and masts to complement the upgraded boards. Both North Sails and Viper have considerable experience in the windsurfing market.

The Mistral One-Design would be offered should the existing format of the Olympic regatta remained, with the Mistral Prodigy being offered should the format change to a slalom type event.

Starboard and Severne Sails – Svein Rasmussen, Rimi Vila and Jim Drake

Starboard introduced a new concept called the “Z Class” which is loosely based around the Formula class, with its main principles being a multiple one-design concept.

The foundation of the proposal is to adopt the Formula rules but to modify the board by addition of a daggerboard to make it more attractive and viable to a greater wind range.

The class structure would very much resemble the current Formula Class, which Starboard feel works very well in providing multi-event racing at different levels (Men, Women, Junior etc).

The class would be made affordable to all nations by limiting the amount of equipment each MNA may purchase. The equipment itself would be limited by a series of design cut-off dates beyond which no new designs may be released. Competitors would be limited each year to the amount of equipment they would be allowed to use including sails, boards, rigs and fins. Sailors would be further limited when registering equipment for each event.

Bic – Guy Chilvers

Bic are multi-brand manufacturer with over a million units of experience who is offering ASA construction assistance to other brands.

Bic have invested a lot of resources into technological advancement in the production capability of its boards. With this in mind, Bic would offer their manufacturing expertise to any manufacturer and would therefore not necessarily design their own board for the trials.

Ideally, Bic would support a multi-manufacturer one-design first and then a Formula multi-brand second.

Bic have the capability of manufacturing over 30,000 units per year.

Bic's primary view is that there has to be a change for windsurfing to continue as an Olympic Sport.

Austrian Board Project “BLIP” – Peter Krimbacher, Christian Brastch

The group consists of a windsurfing coach (Peter Krimbacher) and a mechanical engineer (Christian Brastch) who are concentrating on producing a board, fin and dagger board only, but not a rig.

The group believe that the current format of Olympic Windsurfing should not change and that only the board should be upgraded to reflect modern competition.

The group have used the Mistral prodigy and have modified it in certain areas to increase its performance whilst not affecting the safety of the board. The board is shorter and wider, promoting earlier planning and better manoeuvrability. The group have increased the dagger board and fin length to increase the light wind performance of the board.

Weight would be decreased by changing the construction technique of the current Prodigy board.

As a design group they are willing to sell their concept to the ISAF for licensing to multiple manufacturers.

Under this concept, the sailor would have their choice of rigs, where limits are established by class rules. A sail area limit of 10sq/m is envisioned for the class.

Neil Pryde – Robert Stroj

An adaptable presentation that could be open to either a complete one-design project based around its own equipment, OR, be open to manufacture for a multiple one-design concept.

NP consider themselves to be a dominant force in windsurfing sails and rigs, who supplied the sails for the windsurfing event at the 1992 Olympic regatta, and currently hold the sail licence for the 49er class.

NP opted to present a board that fits to the current Formula Rule and was the only board presented which do not include a dagger board. They consider the advantage of this to be the fastest design available and allows sailors to compete in both the Olympic Class and the Formula class with a minimum amount of equipment change.

The only difference to the Formula rule would be the addition of a second optional fin, which would be designed 10cm longer than the current Formula rule allows. This longer fin would increase the board's performance to be able to race in approximately 7 knots or more of wind.

NP offered a complete men and women's package, including two sails, masts, booms, a board and bags for both the boards and the rigs.

NP's proposal also looked at the class structure of the proposed class and included a percentage of the price which would go towards a class association and to help with events.

Event Format

All boards proposed anticipated a racing format similar to that currently used for the IMCO One Design, with the exception of the Mistral Prodigy which was proposed as more suitable for a slalom type event.

Conclusion

A trend that came from each manufacturer was an enthusiasm for the future of the sport which stemmed from advancements in design and technology. Each manufacturer stated that they were seeing unprecedented interest, excitement and growth in the sport, which relate to the new designs and technology. All stated that they considered Olympic windsurfing to be the pinnacle of the sport and designed their equipment to create a clear path from recreational sailing to the Olympics.

Rich Jeffries
Evaluation Panel Chairman