

World Sailing Question & Answer Service Report
Racing Rules Committee – Race Officials Committee
October 2020

As the four-years committee and rules cycle is approaching to an end, this is a report reflecting our work since we were appointed in early 2017. I was trusted to chair this team with the safety of Marianne Middlethorpe's support. Her loss in February 2018 was a huge blow but together with vice chair Tatiana Ermakova and the rest of team, we hope that we have made her proud.

Our work in numbers (2020 in parenthesis)

Total number of Q&As processed	70	(23)
Published Q&As	51	(11)
<i>The 19 Q&As missing, have not been published for various reasons</i>		
Q&As leading to a rule change	11	

Q&As per RRS section

Race Signals	1	(0)
Definitions	2	(1)
Basic Principles	2	(0)
Part 1, Fundamental Rules	0	(0)
Part 2, When Boats Meet	8	(2)
Part 3, Conduct of a Race	3	(1)
Part 4, Other Requirements When Racing	8	(0)
Part 5, Protests, Redress, Hearings, Misconduct and Appeals	17	(5)
Part 6, Entry and Qualification	0	(0)
Part 7, Race Organization	9	(2)
Other rules	5	(1)

Other deliverables

Since the previous World Sailing conference, additionally to the day-to-day work of the team, we have been working on leaving a legacy to help the next group taking over the work continue instead of spending time finding how the process works. The Q&A panel is a reactive group: our work depends on the questions coming in, and they come throughout the year. There is a rather large team of people involved, thousands of message exchanges and considerable volume of information. Ending our term at the end of 2020, we are proud to deliver:

- All of our operation on Trello since mid 2018. This allows us to have a group chat style discussion, which is easily available to all members of the panel to follow and review, on a computer or through a mobile app, without overflowing inboxes with emails.
- Stored on Trello is information on all Q&As which have gone through the panel, dating back to 2014, for reference.
- Restructured Q&A booklet, to reflect the sections in the Racing Rules of Sailing in a bookmarked pdf, for ease of navigation.
- When the 2021-2024 version of the rules come in effect, all Q&As will be removed from the WS website. An entry 2021-2024 Q&A booklet will be uploaded, which at that point will include the Q&As from the previous cycle that the panel considers important, updated to the latest edition of the Racing Rules of Sailing
- Q&A working manual, attached to this report. This document describes the work of the Q&A panel and we consider it to be our legacy to the next team undertaking the task. This is a live document, meant to be a tool for the people involved in the process. These same people are in charge of keeping it up-to-date. A list of deliverables is included in the manual, and one of them is to update it and deliver a new version at the end of each term.

Suggestions going forward

1. Approval process

This has been the most challenging area of our work in the past term. A race official somewhere in the world is waiting for the Q&A panel's non authoritative expert opinion, and we have put considerable time and effort into it. There shouldn't be additional, out of proportion waiting time. The Q&A panel generates output all year long, therefore we believe that it is best practice to appoint a delegate in each of our reporting committees to be the contact person to the Q&A panel, should the chair be not available. Additionally, a set period of one week should be given to the chairs/responsible persons to raise any objection. If nothing is heard the Q&A should be published.

2. Next term appointment

When the 2021-2024 Q&A panel is appointed, special attention should be made to form a diverse team. Several parameters should be considered:

- Collective understanding of as many race formats as possible.
- Representation of all race officials' disciplines
- What happens in the next cycle? Chair, vice chair and members appointment with an at least 8-year plan.
- Inclusion of young, promising race officials. The Q&A panel is a platform where they will gain knowledge, will learn how to look into matters from different perspectives, accept other people's opinions and gain confidence, making them better race officials for the sport.
- Commitment of the members. A call for interest might be a reasonable way to create the team

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank each of the members of the Q&A panel for their contribution, ideas and lively discussions during the last years. I hope that everyone has enjoyed the process.

Mats Bjorklund (FIN)	Bence Böröcz (HUN)	Lance Burger (RSA)
Natalia Chubenko (RUS)	Rosemary Collins (AUS)	Giorgio Davanzo (ITA)
Russell Green (NZL)	Rick Hatch (CAN)	Timo Haß (GER)
Sungchul Jeong (KOR)	Ewa Jodlowska (POL)	Michał Jodłowski (POL)
Trevor Lewis (GBR)	Flavio Naveria (ARG)	Andrus Poksi (EST)
Manuel Santos e Silva (POR)	David de Vries (AHO)	Bruno de Wannemaeker (BEL)

Thanks to Richard Slater and Sofia Truchanowicz for their assistance in certain Q&As and special thanks to Dick Rose, who has always been available at very short notice, reliably answering questions, usually in the spirit of 'why is rule XX written like that'.

Last but not least, thanks to our vice chair Tatiana Ermakova (RUS) for the continuous support and cooperation.

On behalf of the Q&A panel,
Marina Psychogiou (GRE)
October 2020

Q&A Panel Working Manual

The World Sailing Question & Answer Service is designed to facilitate the consistent application of the Racing Rules of Sailing. Questions may be submitted by any World Sailing Race Official, Class Association or Member National Authority, preferably through a World Sailing Race Official, via the World Sailing Executive Office at race.officials@isaf.com.

The questions are answered by a group of experienced race officials referred to as the Q&A panel. The scope of this document is to practically layout the work of the Q&A panel. [This manual assumes that the free online application Trello is used.](#)

WS office

- There is one contact person in the WS office in charge of the World Sailing Question & Answer Service. Any changes are made known to the chair and vice chair of the Q&A panel.
- Upon receiving a question regarding the application of the Racing Rules of Sailing, the WS office forwards the question to the Q&A panel's chair and vice chair and acknowledges receipt to the submitter.
- When the Q&A is answered, the WS office publishes it in the dedicated section of the WS website, informs the submitter that their question has been answered and notifies all WS Race Officials, Class Associations and Member National Authorities
- All the communication with the submitter is made through the WS office.

Reporting Committees

The World Sailing Question & Answer Service is a joint operation of the WS Racing Rules and the WS Race Officials committees and the chairs of those committees jointly appoint the members of the Q&A panel. The Q&A panel generates output all year long, therefore it is best practice to appoint a delegate in each of those committees, to be the contact person to the Q&A panel, should the chair be not available.

Q&A backstage

- [Upon receipt, a card with the Q&A's name is created in the 'BACKSTAGE' Trello board, under the list 'pending'.](#)
- If the question is not clear, clarifications may be asked to the submitter through the WS office.
- The question is put in the Q&A template, a title is given and, if needed, it is reworded to correspond to the Q&A format.
- [The Trello card is color coded, depending on the corresponding section in the Racing Rules of Sailing that the question refers to.](#)
- The question is sent to a three-person panel and a 2-weeks deadline is set for the production of the first draft. [The card is moved under the list 'with small group'.](#)
- If no draft has been received at the set time, a reminder is sent, offer is helped, and possibly additional members are appointed to the panel.
- When the draft is received, it is formatted and edited for spelling and syntax errors.

Q&A panel discussion

- [The small group draft is moved to the 'Q&A panel' Trello board under the list 'in progress'.](#) The panel members are notified of the new Q&A added and informed of the discussion leader.
- Panel members give their opinion and suggestions. The discussion leader moderates the exchange of opinions and produces the final draft, preferably with a general consensus or strong majority.
- The final answer is edited for consistency in wording and style and there is a final call for comments before moving the Q&A to the next stage.

RRC and ROC chairs approval and publishing

- The Q&A is sent to the chairs of the reporting committees or their appointed delegates and if needed, a short brief is given on the background. [The card is moved under the list 'pending approval'](#).
- A period of one week is given to the chairs to respond. Any comments are discussed and if necessary incorporated in the Q&A.
- At the end of the comment time, the Q&A is brought in the publishing format, given the publishing name, inserted in the booklet and sent to the WS office for publishing. [The card is moved under the list 'to be published'](#).
- [When the Q&A is published, the card is moved under the list of the completed Q&As of the current year.](#)

Afterlife

- Depending on the content, a Q&A may go to the Racing Rule Committee for further consideration, including becoming a Case, a Call or be the grounds for a rule change.
- With the end of the validity of a rules' version, the Q&As also become invalid. In many cases the rule has changed, a case has been published or even the Q&A itself is not considered to be of great value. During the four years but mainly in the second half of the last year, after the publication of the new version of the rules, each Q&A is assessed. If it is decided that it shall continue, it shall be updated to any rules change. It is recommended not to keep too many Q&As: an out of proportion Q&A booklet is not desirable.
- [Whatever happens to the Q&A, it is marked, or color coded as appropriate on its card in the Trello board](#)

Specials

- In some cases, and for various reasons, it might be appropriate that a Q&A is answered privately. In those cases, the Q&A is processed as per the system described in this manual, but the answer is sent to the submitter without being posted on the World Sailing website or included in the booklet. [The card is moved under the list 'Specials'](#)
- When the members of the Q&A panel are not able to reach an agreement about a Q&A, the question is referred to the RRC. [The card is moved under the list 'Q&As referred from panel' on the 'RRC work' Trello board.](#)

General advice

- Check if a Case or a Q&A on a similar situation exists or existed before.
- During the discussion, make sure that all opinions are heard and considered.
- If there is no agreement between the members of the three-person panel, let the full panel see the options.
- Identify the essence of the question and if the discussion is derailing, re-direct the focus of the panel.
- Often a discussion reaches a dead end. It might be worth to let it rest for a while and revisit it with a fresh mind.
- If there are two strong views, summing up the two views and recording who supports what might help. Often one side manages to convince the other.
- Additional input from a specialist or an authority may be requested if necessary. This can be invited either directly or through the WS office or through the RRC or the ROC.
- If despite all attempts there doesn't seem to be a consensus, it usually means that there is a flaw in the rule. The Q&A panel's opinion is not authoritative, the matter should be referred to the RRC.
- Often it is necessary to make a slight change to the question.

Q&A names

- Upon reception, each question is given an alphanumeric working name. This name consists of the current year followed two letters, i.e. Q&A 2021 AA. The letters are reset at the beginning of the quad, avoiding double names. The name remains with the Q&A even if the Q&A is subsequently withdrawn or referred to another group within WS.

- When a Q&A is ready to be published or privately answered to the submitter, it is given a name consisting of the year and the Q&As serial number. The numbers are reset every year, i.e. Q&A 2021.001
- [A record of the Q&A names and titles is kept in the BACKSTAGE Trello board under the list 'Q&A control'.](#)

Q&A 'style'

A template is attached, including fonts, sizing, spaces. Some comments on the content:

- A title is set, a situation is described, and a question is asked.
- Irrelevant information is removed.
- The question shall not refer to a specific case at a specific event. The Q&A panel is not an appeals service!
- Wording is as consistent as possible with the wording of the RRS.

3-person panel appointment

Before bringing a question to the full panel, it is faster to have a base draft as a starting point. A three-person group will usually be efficient, with a balance of speed and quality of output. When appointing the members of the three-person group to a Q&A, the nature of the question needs to be considered, in relation to the members of the three-person group, who shall collectively possess the appropriate experience, leadership and fresh/alternative ideas. One of the members is appointed to be the discussion leader and will stay with the Q&A until it is ready to move to the approval stage. The groups are not fixed, members alternate and work with different people. It is desirable that the workload is being shared among all panel members, according to availability. [A record of the three-person groups appointments is kept in the BACKSTAGE Trello board under the list 'Q&A control'.](#)

Trello boards

A Trello board is a series of lists, with cards attached. It is possible to add documents, comments, links and images on each card. The cards may be dragged and dropped from one list to another. The Trello boards make it possible to have all the Q&A panel's work in one place and with the search function is easy to find one's way through the cards. The Q&A panel Trello board holds information on the panel's work dating back to 2014. Every stage of the process is represented in lists and each Q&A has its own card.

There are two Trello boards dedicated to the Q&A panel work.

- The BACKSTAGE Trello board is accessible to the chair and vice chair of the Q&A panel, the chairs of the ROC and the RRC or their appointed delegates, and the contact person in the WS office.
- The Q&A panel Trello board is accessible to all the members of the Q&A panel, the chairs of the ROC and the RRC or their appointed delegates, and the contact person in the WS office. It is the main working platform of the Q&A panel and it holds the information of the World Sailing Question & Answer Service.

Booklet structure

The Q&A booklet simply includes the Q&As which have survived from previous cycles and the ones published in the current cycle. It is updated every time a Q&A is published. Considering that about 20 Q&As are being published every year, a simple structure is needed. New Q&As are added at the end of the book, and a table of contents in the beginning of the book lists the code number and the title of the Q&A. For ease of reference, there is a second index list which lists the Q&As by corresponding section in the Racing Rules of Sailing. The booklet is a PDF file for electronic distribution, which includes bookmark links from both index lists, for ease of navigation through the document.

Internal feedback

The Q&A panel is a team of people working closely together, all year long. It is important to get their feedback on the panel's operation but also to recognize the work. In the recent years a short meeting in person was organized on the side of the WS annual conference with the members of the panel who were present. It is important to continue the tradition when life becomes normal again, but it is probably worth organizing a virtual meeting once a year, which will have the advantage of including all members, in order to collect feedback and to give team members some form of recognition.

End of term deliverables

At the end of the four years term, a new version of the Racing Rules of Sailing applies, and a new Q&A panel is appointed. The legacy of the old Q&A panel should be:

- Copy of the current Trello board with all the information on the work that has been made, to be created and given access to the WS office at the end of the term. This will be the base of the next team.
- Updated Q&A Panel Working Manual (this document) to include the experience that was gathered during the term, to be delivered to the WS office at the end of the term
- Q&A Booklet to include the Q&As that should continue existing, after updating them to the current rules, to be delivered to the WS office on 1 January of the first year of the new quad.
- Clean Q&A section on the WS website, except for the booklet, to be made by the WS on the first working day after 1 January of the first year of the new quad.

Q&A panel members appointment

At the beginning of the four years term, when the Q&A panel is appointed, special attention should be made to form a diverse team. Several parameters should be considered:

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- Representation of all race officials' disciplines
- What happens in the next cycle? Chair, vice chair and members appointment with an at least 8-year plan.
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- Commitment of the members. A call for interest might be a reasonable way to create the team