

# SYRA SPRING MEETING

## MINUTES

21<sup>st</sup> March 2012, St Barthelemy

**Meeting commenced at 1710**

### **1. Opening from the Executive Committee Chairman**

Ed Dubois (ED) opens the meeting, explains that 50 people had said they would come to the meeting and points out that there are about 70 seats filled. ED welcomes everyone; the members, the 'members to be' and the observers and thanks everyone for coming. ED refers to the purpose of SYRA; to enhance the enjoyment of superyacht owners, their guests and their crews by taking all available steps to make for safe racing and to encourage 'rewarding' and, as far as possible, 'fair' competition. ED thanks all the Working Committees on behalf of the Executive Committee for their excellent and time-consuming effort. ED reports that safety standards have been greatly improved since the beginning of the Association. Fair racing and handicapping is the second but important priority and SYRA is the necessary forum to develop solutions. ED hands over to Peter Craig, the Executive Director.

### **2. Report from the Executive Director**

Peter Craig (PC) explains that he will work through the agenda and encourages everyone to ask questions or make comments at any time.

PC references the Annual General Meeting in Monaco - great progress was made including voting on 11 or 12 items. Really useful to be able to have the Spring Meeting here in St Barths with 47 yachts competing, many industry people and a great number of professional sailors present – a meaningful platform for superyacht discussions.

### **Administrative (Exhibit A)**

PC explains that this Exhibit is simply a description of what the SYRA is about, who makes up the Executive Committee and an explanation of the 'Mission' of the SYRA... "to enhance the enjoyment of the yacht owner".

### **Current Member List (Exhibit B)**

PC refers to the list of members, which as of this meeting stands at 36 members, consisting of yacht owners, superyacht events and industry companies. There will be more discussion on membership later with Agenda item # 7.

### **SYRA Committees (Exhibit C)**

PC briefly runs through the list of the five Committees for the benefit of anyone who isn't aware of the SYRA committee system; the Executive Committee, the Membership Committee, Onboard Safety Committee, Fair Racing/Handicapping Committee and the Uniform Racing Rules Committee. This exhibit also shows the missions for these Committees.

### **SYRA Website (Exhibit D)**

PC refers to the example screenshots taken from the website and encourages people to refer to the SYRA website and use the information that is available. The intention is to list every superyacht regatta and as much detail as possible about each event including the wind conditions, the percentage of reaching/running in the course etc. This is very useful for obtaining comprehensive information for each regatta, how the yachts are performing under certain handicap rules, information about protests, injuries, etc.

### **3. Uniform Racing Rules**

#### **2012 ISAF Approvals (Exhibit E)**

PC refers to a major accomplishment in the form of temporary approvals from ISAF to implement changes to the racing rules including the 40 metre minimum separation. Legally, it is important (for insurance purposes amongst others) that we race under the rules of ISAF. A new change to the ISAF rules for superyacht racing this year is the definition of the 'zone'. Feedback from last year's regattas was universal that the 'zone' should not be defined in boat lengths. This is now defined as a fixed distance of 300 metres.

PC introduces Jim Capron, chief judge for the Bucket Regatta, who is a member of the ISAF Racing Rules Committee and was instrumental in expediting the rule changes through ISAF. Jim will be going out on the water during the regatta so that he can gain some first-hand experience on the differences between racing superyachts and conventional racing-yachts such as a Farr 40.

PC refers to positive feedback and input from some of the professional sailors following the recent regatta in the British Virgin Islands. Input from well-informed and experienced, pros is vital as we work towards gaining final approvals for the superyacht racing rules, so that they can be encompassed in the form of a Superyacht Racing Appendix within the ISAF rules. This will hopefully be completed by November.

PC says that feedback from tacticians and afterguard members has been positive. People are saying it is great to know that the rules are the same regatta to regatta wherever they race. This is huge progress for the Uniform Racing Rules Committee.

#### **Standard Superyacht NOR and SI (Exhibit F)**

One of the next steps for the Uniform Racing Rules Committee is to implement a standard NOR and SI that can be used at all superyacht regattas. This will mean that each event will use the same language and have the same rules that are not covered by ISAF. Some examples include bow thruster use, Safety Officers, Radio Communications on the VCHF Safety Channel and Declaration Forms. The Event Organisers are all communicating and cooperating with PC so standardisation of the NOR and SI is in the pipeline.

#### **Racecourse Examples – Kattack Portable GPS**

PC refers to the Kattack portable GPS system and the equipment mandated at some regattas such as the Bucket. The information from each GPS unit is downloaded following racing and the yacht's track can be easily viewed along with other yachts on a computer screen. This can be beneficial in any number of ways; the Race Officer can see which mark roundings and courses work better; it can assist the handicapper review performance; and obviously can be beneficial for monitoring behaviour on the race course. It can also be a tool for helping resolve on water disputes. Superyacht racing is not suited for overaggressive sailing and this system helps by emphasising to the afterguards that 'big brother is watching'!

PC runs examples of the Kattack showing the yachts on the last day of Bucket racing in 2011 and the fleet's track - fast forwarded. PC then runs a more focused example showing how closely some yachts come to one another in various situations. The final slide shows the 40 Metre Range Report that lists those yachts which came within 40 metres of other yachts. PC recognises that some situations where distance is less than 40 metres are unavoidable, but explains that this system will help with immediate feedback onsite for the Event Organizer to identify bad behaviour and problem areas on the racecourse. We need to ensure that everyone is making the best possible efforts to sail by the rules.

PC discusses the post-race Declaration Form and explains how important it is for everyone to write down anything they are unhappy with on the racecourse - such as Safety Officers not answering radio hails on the Safety Channel. Without this feedback, the Race Officer cannot know who is racing too aggressively and behaving inappropriately. If a particular offending yacht is repeatedly reported, the Race Office will call them in for a chat and insist that they race within the rules if they would like to be invited back next year.

PC asks for any feedback or questions regarding the use or misuse of the Kattack system. There were no comments. (Post Bucket comment: we called in three afterguards on Sunday morning prior to racing to issue first hand warnings).

#### **4. Onboard Safety**

This topic touches on the main reason that the SYRA was started and some good progress has been made. PC refers to **Exhibit G**, a sample page from the Racing Safety Manual which was put together by P2's Jonathan Kline - the full document can be found on the website. This is a great document and reflects a monumental effort from Jonathan and the entire P2 crew.

*Applause.*

PC refers to a project manager who oversees six yachts who sent an email to his six captains asking them to take the time to look over the Safety Manual. This generic safety manual touches on all the areas that any Boat Captain should have checked, tested and practiced prior to racing. The manual is a culmination of 6-7 years experience in racing and practicing, with systems and procedures adjusted and tweaked after every regatta. This area needs to be expanded on further, but the manual is an excellent start. PC encourages everyone to spread the word about this and ensure all captains read it.

#### **Safety Officer Requirements – SYRA Database (Exhibit H)**

PC outlines the necessity of having a suitable Safety Officer (SO) and how the Bucket Regatta is the first that stipulated actual requirements and for the designated Safety Officer to submit a resume. It has been agreed that it is important that the Safety Officer have proper qualifications and the Bucket Regatta outlined the necessary requirements to qualify as a SO. The SO cannot have other duties such as navigator or helmsman. They must carry a handheld radio and be responsible for communicating on the designated Safety Channel with other yachts on the racecourse as necessary – to eliminate the excuse that they didn't hear the call.

The information from the SO form will go into an SYRA database and a record will be kept of the approved Safety Officers. This will save time and effort for other Event Organizers and the individuals who have already submitted their resumes and forms.

#### **Next Steps**

One of the next steps for the Onboard Safety Committee is to address issues such as winches, loads on running rigging, and how to measure these loads. This will assist less experienced racing programs on how to address these important issues and avoid exceeding safe loads while racing.

PC asks for any feedback or questions regarding Onboard Safety. There were no comments.

#### **5. High Priority Safe Racing Issues**

PC explains that in his experience the main focus as Principal Race Officer over the last three years - 15-16 regattas - used to be 'good racing' and 'race course management', but since becoming involved with the SYRA, that focus has changed with the top priority now being 'safe racing'.

## **Boat Captain Authority**

PC explains that yacht captains are responsible, legally, for the safety of their respective vessels. Often the racing tactician makes the call on the racecourse, however, the ultimate authority lies with the captain, as the vessel is their responsibility. It is important that everyone racing on the yacht be aware of this and it will be reinforced at the Captains Meeting during the Bucket. PC points out that 60% of the Safety Officers at the Bucket are in fact the Boat Captain. PC suggests there is room for discussion here – perhaps the Safety Officer *should* be the Boat Captain.

Jonathan Kline, Program Manager of P2, explains that there is importance with the relationship between the Racing Tactician, Navigator, Helmsman and the Safety Officer – if that relationship is going well and there is a clear understanding between them, achievable by discussions during the pre-briefings, then things are always a lot smoother. It shouldn't be an adversarial relationship – a lot of our pros on board make that clear very early – it's not 'me against them' – we are all aiming for the same safe finish and a good result.

Michael Bradfield, owner of TWIZZLE, states that the owner employs the captain and the captain legally has the responsibility and he has to have the final 'veto'. If the tactician wants to go one way and the captain says no, it doesn't matter if it is the 'right' call or not – When a race crew are training, they have got to understand that it is the ultimate responsibility of the captain. There will be some owners who will over-ride the captain, but they don't have the right to because they are not the ones with a 3000 tonnes licence.

PC then mentions the point about knowledge of the racing rules of sailing and how many of the captains are fully knowledgeable about the rules at the level that everybody would like them to be and maybe that is something we can work on.

Michael Bradfield thinks that is a good idea. Ultimately none of us can afford a really bad accident. The outcome of this will be that we will all have our (racing) insurance pulled and there will no longer be any regattas for big boats, but the other thing is no one wants to have a major injury, be it crew or guests.

PC agrees that those are all good points and there is some work to be done in this area. (Post Bucket note: a new concern based on observations on the Bucket racecourse is that there were in fact yacht(s) racing with *nobody* in the afterguard having the requisite knowledge on the RRS. It only takes one yacht doing the wrong thing to cause a collision. This issue will need to be addressed by the SYRA).

## **Safety Officer – Radio Use**

PC explains that there has not been one regatta he has been Principal Race Officer for in the last year where he has not had at least one complaint about a yacht or yachts not responding to a radio call on the Safety Channel. This is an on-going problem. It is unlikely that there are technical problems with the type of equipment used these days so we need to come up with ways of enforcing radio use. PC refers to the Post-Racing Declaration Form and asks everyone to note those yachts which do not respond to radio calls. As a tertiary form of safety communication, there is also the cell-phone option – everyone racing will have a list of all of the yachts' phone numbers. When assessing the Declaration Forms, if a particular yacht name comes up more than once, the Tactician, Safety Office and the Captain will be called in to the Race Office for discussion. PC encourages the Safety Officers to talk to each other and run through any particular incidents that may have occurred following each race. (Post Bucket note: this was a major issue at the Bucket Regatta. Many verbal complaints of yachts not responding on VHF yet only 8 recorded on Declaration Forms).

Peter Wilson explains it would be a good idea to get everyone to do a Radio Check to the Race Committee before the race to ensure the radios are all working

PC states that that is a good idea and that it was in the SI for the Virgin Gorda Regatta and we will make sure it is done at the Bucket. This should be in the standardised SI going forward. (Post regatta note: done at the Bucket... and each morning we had to chase multiple boats who were in the starting area not monitoring the VHF Safety Channel).

Michael Bradfield asks if there should be a timing on the radio check? Perhaps three minutes before the start of each yacht.

PC responds saying in Virgin Gorda we had the radio check within an hour of the start of the race and this worked well.

Michael Bradfield asks if AIS (Automatic Identification System) is mandatory? I noticed that some yachts don't have it.

David Evans states that the sails can get in the way – having trouble on Salperton at the moment – it's a bit intermittent and he apologised for this.

PC explains for the St Barths Bucket, it is mandatory to have your AIS on if you have one.

David Evans suggested an 'all stations, radio check' call if someone is having trouble getting through to a particular boat.

PC thinks it's a good idea and it would verify that the problem is not at your end. This can be added to the suggestions for the standardised SI.

### **Minimum 40 metre Separation**

PC explains there is a grey area here and perhaps a perception problem that needs addressing. He states that 40 metres means 40 metres. He points out that some people's understanding of this rule is that it's only a guideline and it is fine to go within 40 metres but just not 'too close'. How can we get the point across that 40 metres minimum separation indeed means 40 metres? PC encourages anyone who is involved in discussions expressing the attitude that 40 metres is simply a guideline, to please set them straight.

Michael Bradfield explains that it's the smaller, faster, nimbler boats that make the approach and cut it fine. The yacht they are approaching may be a much slower or more unwieldy boat by comparison and that is why this is such an important rule.

PC responds saying that we have to use the lowest common denominator of manoeuvrability to keep things safe on the racecourse.

Barry Houghton adds that the smaller, nimbler boats think that they can manage the close situations but there would be a change of view if a 600 tonnes Perini came within 10 metres of them bearing down on them.

Jonathan Kline asks is portable laser distance finding equipment illegal on board? PC responds saying no and there has been some positive discussion on this. Jonathan states he has used this and one often misjudges the distance – with the actual distance being more than estimated. He then states that he thought it was against the rules to use it.

Robbie Doyle comments and he thinks that may be an America's Cup rule.

PC will look into it.

Andy Green's question raised the issue of a port tack yacht "being allowed" across by the starboard tack yacht and crossing ahead by less than 40 metres. There was discussion on whether the port tack boat can indeed cross ahead within the rules, with permission from the starboard tacker, if the distance between yachts ends up being less than 40 metres.

(Post Bucket Comment: with a large fleet there are situations where the port tack yacht continuing along and passing ahead of the starboard tack yacht by less than 40 metres, agreed to by both yachts, might be safer than the port tack yacht having to take avoiding action, be it dipping or tacking... based on lack of manoeuvrability and/or other traffic in the area).

By the rules it appears the port tack boat must keep clear by at least 40 metres. This clearly needs further discussion and will be taken up by the SYRA Uniform Racing Rules Committee.

PC says that in the interim, radio communication will solve any misinterpretations and play a role in keeping it safe because both yachts will know what the other is doing.

### **Rule Enforcement**

In past years the Bucket superyacht racing used to be considered very informal and all about having fun. Protests are not fun and were perceived to be the wrong thing for someone to do – not within the "spirit of the Bucket". However, some superyacht regattas now have a 5-member international jury panel. Other regattas one may participate in may not have a jury panel at all. What is the right answer and where does the SYRA think we should be with this? Do we need to have a qualified jury panel in order to make racing safer? Most people follow the rules, but it only takes one who doesn't and superyacht racing can become extremely dangerous as accidents are more likely to happen when all participants are not abiding by the rules. PC asks for discussion about how the rules can be enforced and explains that it is really vital to receive feedback from the yacht owners for their opinions on this.

PC explains that two of the three members of the jury panel at the Bucket will be racing during the regatta.

Bill Tripp suggests using the word 'infraction' instead of 'protest' to try and reduce the stigma and keep within the 'spirit' of the style of most superyacht regattas whilst having a way of bringing up any important issues.

PC recalls that last year they termed it a 'safety hearing'.

Michael Bradfield feels that if the incident in question is an infringement of a safety rule, it should be brought to the attention of the committee. However, if someone, for example, does not go around a mark, the yacht in question should own up to this.

PC is looking into the possibility, with the support of ISAF, of giving the Organising Authority the ability to not invite a yacht back and dismiss them from the regatta. This would only happen to repeat offenders.

Bruce Brakenhoff says that there is a real danger in NOT having this as an option and that there has to be an accountability and punishment to get people's attention and encourage people to stick to the rules.

### **6. Fair Racing/Handicapping**

We've put together a great SYRA committee for this. This has not been the top priority over the last 10 months but we have made some progress. We are going to focus more sharply on this topic going forward. PC explains that the Fair Racing Committee has an open dialogue with the IRC and the Bucket Rule.

## **Comparison Scoring the Bucket**

This will be calculated behind the scenes, post event. 24 of the 47 yachts entered in the Bucket have valid 2012 IRC certificates. It is likely that we can learn a lot about both rules by doing comparison scoring.

## **Evaluating Rating Rules (Pros & Cons)**

We are not trying to say one rule is better than the other – this is an exercise to help learn more about handicapping/rating systems and evaluate the pros and cons of each.

## **Recommendations**

With what we learn from this exercise, we will not only share with other Event Organizers, but also be in a position to provide observations and recommendations to the rule authorities. This will hopefully lead to positive change.

## **Importance of Class Breaks**

Class breaks are a good thing given the huge disparity in performance characteristics with superyachts. Having classes where relatively similar yachts are racing against one another without massive differences in speed is a positive thing. More classes means more trophies and more winners, which is always a good thing!

## **Racing Yachts versus True Cruising Yachts**

PC says this is a recent development that is becoming problematic. Superyacht racing is about fun regattas at great venues, which are becoming more and more popular to owners of large cruising yachts. The numbers speak for themselves. There has been an increased interest from ‘racing oriented’ yachts such as the Wally 100, F1 class yachts and others. They are considered to be superyachts based on the conventional definition (LOA of over 100 feet or 30 metres). This has created fair racing / competitive issues when one has a 600 ton, under canvased, pure cruising superyacht competing against a 100 footer that was primarily designed to race. It’s a tall order to ask any handicap or rating rule to create a level playing field with such dissimilar vessels.

Appropriate class breaks helps, but handicapping the entire fleet and determining the overall winner at these superyacht regattas becomes a real challenge when you have racing-orientated boats racing against large cruising superyachts. PC asks for any comments. Should we evolve with the definition of a ‘superyacht’ to be a more complex multi-faceted definition as opposed to the current understanding of merely LOA? 30 metres used to be considered ‘enormous’ but is no longer. For example, the *average* LOA at the Bucket this year is 43 metres with 30 metres being the smallest yacht! The Bucket Regatta will be taking a close look at this for 2013.

Michael Bradfield states that superyacht sailing boats are like pornography! You can’t define it but you know it when you see it!

## **7. Expanding SYRA Membership/Involvement**

We now have 36 members on board and many have been very active in participation – through our three active committees. We feel strongly that this organisation is very important in keeping the racing safe and enjoyable for the yacht owners. Therefore, expanding membership is critical and we are keen to have 50-60 members onboard a year from now. (Post meeting note: 4 entities have joined since the Spring Meeting bringing membership to 40). PC invites Barry Houghton, as a yacht owner, to say a few words on this topic.

Barry Houghton explains that he hopes everyone recognises the excellent amount of work that has been done and continues to be done on the safety aspects of superyacht racing. There is a lot more to do and I would like to encourage everyone in this room (yacht designers, yacht managers, yacht captains and yacht owners) to encourage other owners to join this association. It is a tiny amount of money compared to the running of a boat. I hope that everyone agrees that this organisation is now producing valuable results.

Bernard Lambilliotte asks if they can get Yacht Clubs and Event Organisers to make it compulsory for people to join the organisation?

Barry Houghton responds saying that's a very good idea but designers, managers and captains have direct and close links with yacht owners (much more than the organiser) and they should be encouraging people, for the safety reason alone, to be joining this association and it will then become an even more valuable organisation.

Ed Dubois responds saying that he is hoping that this association will gather sufficient momentum and credibility within the world of superyacht racing to make that possible (Bernard). We already have critical mass and I hope we can go to the yachting community and ask them to accept your suggestion but I think we need a few more members before we can do that.

Barry Houghton continues and states that there are more than 25 boats at this event who really ought to become members if they value the safety aspect of superyacht racing.

PC adds that Bucket Regattas is a member of the Association and perhaps next year, when membership figures have increased further, the Bucket Directors will look at making SYRA membership compulsory for all Bucket entrants.

PC invites Robbie Doyle, as a valuable member of the industry, to say a few words on expanding membership.

Robbie Doyle states that he feels that companies who attend these events expect to spend some money. He believes that having 47 yachts racing safely together in St Barths simply would not be possible to do without this organisation. There are a lot of very talented people as members who have given a lot of great input already and made such a positive difference to racing through the platform that is the SYRA. Everybody's eyes are being opened as boats get faster, bigger and deeper and we cannot afford to become complacent. We cannot have different regattas with different sets of rules. One set of rules that everyone becomes accustomed to limits the likelihood of rules being misinterpreted. My eyes have been opened by how much this association has accomplished in one year. We must encourage all industry people to join this association as everyone is benefiting from the results that are being achieved.

Bernard Lambilliotte asks if we can start with making one regatta insist on SYRA membership being compulsory?

PC responds saying that this is certainly a discussion for the event organisers. SYRA is an Advisory Association. It is not a national or international governing body and we don't 'make policy' – at this early stage, we make recommendations. Where we will be in 5 or 10 years from now, nobody knows, but right now we are an advisory group and our primary focus is on safety. It's going in the right direction and the attendance here today is a great testament to that.

## **8. SYRA Second Year Priorities**

May 9<sup>th</sup> is the beginning of our second year. The first priority was safety. PC asks the audience if there is anything else SYRA should be focusing on for the second year that hasn't been discussed today.

John Barrett (Endeavour) states that he believes it would be valuable to the Board to involve areas of the industry such as a legal expert, a maritime expert and yacht insurance companies so that we aren't guessing on important issues. When people talk about the captains' responsibilities, these types of people could help define/explain the roles.

PC states that he thinks that is a great idea and will pursue.

Andy Green suggests that perhaps insurance companies can offer some sort of credit to the boats that are members of the Association.

Barry Houghton explains that he wrote to his insurance authority to receive approval for a certain number of people to be allowed on board for the racing. The yacht had to have specific kit on board to satisfy the insurance company's guidelines and they gave the limit as 36 people.

PC responds saying that we will direct our attention to this and in fact already have two insurance companies onboard as members.

Toby Allies states that perhaps the event organisers can make more of an effort to promote their association with SYRA to the yachts participating in their events. Perhaps their entry fee could be discounted to the members of the Association. This would help to raise the profile of SYRA and help spread the message. (Post meeting note: A "differential entry fee" be it discounted or increased based on membership status is certainly a discussion item for the SYRA and Event Organizers).

PC invites Ed Dubois, the Chairman, to say a few closing words.

ED concludes the meeting stating that he is delighted to see that so many people came today and he really feels that this organisation is totally necessary and believes everyone should be involved with it. If we get more members, the subscription will be reduced.

Without Peter Craig, this progress would not be happening. I think he has done a wonderful job and I would like to thank him very much for everything he has done so far.

*Applause*

**Meeting concludes at approximately 1820 with a post-meeting social (beer/wine) on the deck that wrapped up at 1900.**