

# SYRA Spring Meeting MINUTES

March 27, 2013  
St Barthelemy

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

Ed Dubois (ED) welcomes everyone to the meeting: the members, the ‘members to be’ and observers. He refers to the history of SYRA, began in 2011 and now has over 50 members. SYRA is an official entity and self-funding. He refers to the purpose of SYRA - to enhance safe racing awareness. ED explains superyachts are huge boats (hundreds of tons, sailing 10-12 knots) and present the risk of causing serious damage. He reports that we have seen big improvements in the awareness of safe and fair racing, but there is still more to do. ED reports he is stepping down as Chairman and there will be a vote for the new chair and executive committee. ED thanks everyone for their interest and involvement in the SYRA, which is helping with the safety of people who sail on these yachts as well as the industry as a whole.

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

Peter Craig (PC) explains he will work his way through the agenda - going through some of the exhibits - not all - but that all of them are posted on the SYRA website. The purpose of the spring meeting is to get everyone here up to speed and he encouraged everyone to ask questions or comment at any time going forward.

### **Caribbean Circuit (Exhibit A)**

PC explains 46 yachts are sailing in three winter regattas (SuperYacht Challenge Antigua, Caribbean Super Yacht Regatta & Rendezvous, St Barths Bucket Regatta). The member column indicates only 16 of the 46 are currently members of the SYRA. It should catch your attention that several boats are very active, participating in two regattas over this three-month period, yet they are not members. PC encourages anyone to help educate boat captains and yacht owners and encourage more yachts to come on board. This was always intended to be a yacht owner based organization. The Industry has played a significant role getting the SYRA off the ground and will be instrumental going forward, but it should be yacht owner based. There are 25 yacht owners onboard right now, but our hope is to grow that number to 50 with your help.

### **Current Members (Exhibit B)**

PC refers to the list of members, which as of this meeting stands at 64 and consists of yacht owners, superyacht events and industry related companies. The superyacht events are listed separately, however some of the events are represented in the SYRA by companies in the industry section – examples are Pendennis Shipyard / Pendennis Cup and Hodgon Yachts / Shipyard Cup. There are over 50 paying members right now. PC reminds everyone that at the AGM in Monaco last September, his goal was to get 20 new members in the next calendar year, and we just signed our 17<sup>th</sup> new member over the past six months. Solid participation from the industry and we are gaining momentum with those yachts that race. PC explains the membership

initiative put in play in September - the differential entry fee - will be helpful and has already resulted in some gains. He expresses the hope to exceed the goal of 20 new members and see SYRA well over 60 paying members by the AGM next September.

### **New Chairs to the SYRA Committees (Exhibit C)**

PC recognizes the three committees in play and states that there are new and ongoing initiatives that we will be making progress on over next few months.

PC introduces the new chairpersons for each committee:

- Kate Branagh Fair Racing / Handicapping Committee
- Edoardo Recchi Uniform Racing Rules Committee
- Ian Craddock Onboard Safety Committee

PC encourages anyone who is interested to participate in any of the three committees and welcomes anyone to get involved to help move the issues forward and solve some of the problems we are experiencing in superyacht racing.

### **Executive Committee Composition (Exhibit D)**

PC explains there is one outstanding action item from the September meeting - the composition of the executive committee. The current committee has been in play for two years. PC made a proposal to add event organizers who are actively making decisions on behalf of yacht owners in the course of running their regattas. He explains there was some spirited discussion at the AGM about making changes to the EXCOM with agreement to table the issue until the spring meeting. The compromise is for fewer changes, but increasing event organizer involvement. The proposed executive committee is:

- Co-chairpersons: Barry Houghton and Kate Branagh
- Committee Members: Ruurt Meulemans, Bill Tripp, Toby Allies, Robbie Doyle, Jonathan Kline, Tim Laughridge and Peter Craig

Additionally, the executive committee will remain open to any superyacht owner who wishes to be on the committee and participate.

PC states the proposed committee would be in effect beginning on April 1, 2013.

The motion carried with no dissenting votes.

### **Differential Entry fee Initiative (Exhibit E)**

PC directs attendees to the website for the Differential Entry Fee overview. All event organizers (those who are members) have agreed to go forward with the 500€ or 500\$ differential because they are keen to see yacht owners become members of the association. PC explains that it still is not required to be a member to race, although there was some discussion at the AGM about taking that step. The hope and goal is to keep it optional and attain the membership level voluntarily. PC states the Differential Entry Fee started with this week's Bucket Regatta - if any Bucket entrant joins SYRA during the regatta, the discount will apply. The Differential Entry

Fee will be in place at upcoming spring and summer Med and East Coast superyacht regattas. PC opens it up to membership questions from attendees (there were none). PC announces that membership renewals have been very good with only 2 of the 38 from last year electing not to renew, which is a testament to the association and what is getting done.

### **Uniform Racing Rules**

PC reiterates the one overriding goal at SYRA, which has been a top priority and needs to stay there, and that is to ensure we keep the boats apart. Collision avoidance.

### **Appendix SY (Exhibit F)**

PC announces that Appendix SY was approved and is in play in ISAF's Racing Rules of Sailing for 2013-2016. He explains we have been using Appendix SY the past two years on a trial basis, but now it is formally approved with very few modifications. The modifications include - 300m zone now instead of the 5 boat lengths from the initial version of the trial rules. Additionally, SY 3.1 and 3.3 are new. Section 3.1 addresses propulsion; yachts can use propulsion for collision avoidance or other safety related matters. PC explains that event organizers no longer need to state this in their SI's. Section 3.3 deals with rule enforcement. This new rule gives the race committee and protest committee at any superyacht regatta the ability to protest a yacht when it learns *from any source* that boats have sailed within 40 metres of one another. PC states that people are still reluctant to file a protest, which is understandable. There are a number of excuses for not doing so, including that it goes against the wishes of the yacht owner. But unequivocally, there are still dangerous situations and near misses occurring on the racecourse. PC is seeking feedback on how to get where we need to be with people understanding they cannot do some of the things they are doing on the racecourse.

Discussions after racing between afterguard members following an incident are not having much of an effect. Often times there is disagreement on the specifics of the incident with no action taken and then confusion regarding which party is right or wrong. There are numerous options for penalties: doing circles, losing places or time, but very few to date have acknowledged breaking a rule and have taken the alternative penalty offered. At the St Barths Bucket last year - with 47 yachts racing over 3 days – not one alternative penalty was taken. PC recognizes that not every infraction is a major, but there is no doubt there were some dangerous incidents happening on the racecourse last year – particularly on Saturday.

PC opens it up to the audience for ideas on increasing the level of awareness and making people think twice before they do something they shouldn't be doing on the racecourse.

### **Pantaenius Laser Rangefinders (Exhibit G)**

Dirk Johnson from Perini Navi brings up the new laser range finders. Dirk explains they have been using the range finder from the helm station by the wheel, as that is where the Safety Officer is, but it is difficult to know the exact separation. It is 40m from the wheel, but consistency is a concern. How do we handle the discrepancy going forward?

PC recognizes the issue. He digresses to address the Kattack GPS as a powerful tool, not for determining a precise measurement of 40 meters, but for substantiating an incident that has happened on the racecourse. It also helps a race manager to see the congestion on the racecourse.

PC states it is a great tool in that regard. The Pantenius rangefinder that will be issued to all yachts in St Barths, is just that – a tool. It should help cut back on what we all experienced here in St Barths last year, which was an enormous amount of dialogue on the safety channel about what was 40m and what was not. PC states that there were positive reviews from the use of the rangefinders in Antigua. He explains it can be as good a tool as you want it to be. PC gives the example if you are coming into a crossing situation and your bow is going to be the closest point, to have the range finder run up to the bow and use your communications system to get a reading on distance. PC recognizes it would be good to have more than one on board. The tool might not be perfect, but it can certainly help.

Robbie Doyle (Doyle Sailmakers) states it would be nice to have two on board.

Toby Brand (Captain of Lionheart) praises the rangefinders. He feels in crossing situations they work well, and side by side too. But overtaking situations are a concern with accuracy issues.

PC states they may not be precise in all instances, but they do serve to eliminate some of the variances. People had widely different ideas about what 40 metres is and 80 metres is for the all important overtaking situations.

Andy Green comments it is very useful and a good tool for the afterguard.

*There are similar comments from others with most agreeing that the range finders can be helpful.*

### **Case Studies**

PC next brings up some Kattack GPS case studies. These are examples of how Kattack works and how it can be helpful in analyzing tactical situations and application of the rules. He states that there appears to be two major issues with the rules: a lack of understanding about the new Appendix SY and a basic lack of knowledge about the Racing Rules of Sailing. PC explains how the Daily Declaration Form can be helpful in that the race committee can take an incident reported on the form and review in on Kattack the same evening to determine what actually happened on the water and then act if necessary.

PC shows a Case Study of an overtaking incident. Boats are heading towards the finish line and the Kattack tracking shows a clear-cut infraction by the overtaking yacht, which closes well inside of 40 metres (substantiated on the Declaration Form). PC questions why this is happening – the rules are clear and the yachts should never be this close. Kattack helps us to substantiate these infractions and now under the new Appendix SY, enables the race committee to act on them.

Another Case Study showed a major infraction with the 300m zone at a turning mark. This was from the 2012 St Barths Bucket; the case study was first presented in Monaco, but this type of incident continues to happen too frequently. PC stresses the importance of not letting competitive advantage take precedence over safe racing. PC also runs through a slideshow of photographs documenting the same infraction to complement what Kattack GPS demonstrated. It

is a clear case of a yacht's afterguard making a bad decision and making safe racing a secondary priority.

### **Declaration Forms**

PC states that event organizers should be looking carefully at the Daily Declaration Forms and reviewing Kattack GPS tracking on a daily basis during their regattas. He stresses the importance of bringing racecourse safety issues to the event organizer's attention. The Safety Officer has an obligation to report any incident or rule infraction. If a yacht does not wish to protest they don't have to - an informal rules hearing represents an alternative course of action. PC notes the event organizer cannot act on bad behavior if it is not reported on the Declaration Form.

PC remarks that another essential role the Declaration Form can play is identifying those yachts not answering on the VHF Safety Channel. He emphasizes that it must be noted on the Declaration Form for the race committee to know which yachts are not complying. PC explains the race committee keeps track in St Barths and will follow up with the offending yacht. He relays that if there is a problem on the racecourse, the event organizer is willing to act to help keep the racing safe.

Another example on the importance of the Declaration Forms from last year at the St Barths regatta was when there were 4 independent reports on one boat being too aggressive and not abiding by the rules. The race committee called in the offending afterguard on Sunday morning prior to racing and made it clear that the yacht would not be invited back the following year if there was a similar report following Sunday's racing. There were no reports on the offending yacht that day. This is another example of how the event organizer can enhance safe racing if Safety Officers use the Declaration Form as intended.

Norma Trease (press) has a question for PC: you have mentioned that competitive advantage should never overtake the role of safety. Does that have something to do with why the Bucket has fewer entries this year? PC answers that it is not necessarily directly related. 36 entries at any superyacht regatta is a great fleet and it is consistent with the St Barths numbers over the past 4-5 years.... 2012 was an unusual year with record entries. However, it's fair to speculate that the congestion on the racecourse last year might have kept a few boats away this year, but that is precisely why we have a new race format this year. We will have 3 pursuit classes with separate finishes along with a stand alone racing class consisting of the five J Class Yachts, which will start and finish first.

Barry Houghton (yacht owner - *Salperton*) commented that in Virgin Gorda last week there was much more radio use than at previous regattas. In combination with the range finders, the racecourse is far safer and situations were handled in a safer manner. Many Safety Officers were alerting surrounding yachts what they were about to do. It may not have been mandatory in the Sailing Instructions, but alerting others of your intentions and radio dialogue was helpful.

Bill Tripp (Yacht Designer) commented on the number of entries. Last year in the Virgin Islands (Loro Piana SY Regatta) there were 11 boats racing and 47 at the Bucket - this year 20 and 36 entries respectively. The numbers have been consistent and stable with some owners simply choosing different regattas.

Jon Barrett had a rules question, specifically the 40 metre rule. He remarks that the 40m rule is working in crossing situations, but questions if 40m might be excessive for a ducking situation. PC comments that this has come up before and is a good question. He explains that 40m came about as the distance for minimum separation for simplicity - because it reflected the average LOA of a superyacht. PC also acknowledged that ISAF has allowed for the Appendix SY to be adjusted and tweaked going forward. PC recognizes that 40m is not necessarily the right distance, but it's the rule today. People on the water making the calls need to make suggestions going forward if they think that means changing.

Bill Tripp states that this is the first step and we are trying to get everyone on the same page, beginning with 40m consistently everywhere.

PC suggests that if we allow for a different minimum distance for one tactical situation such as ducking, it could lead to confusion and confusion is not a good thing.

### **Combining Fleets**

PC acknowledges the 2013 edition of the St Barths Bucket will be featuring both a racing fleet using a conventional fleet start and a cruising fleet using a pursuit start. This is new ground for the Bucket. And ISAF did not intend for a class racing using the standard RRS competing at the same regatta with a class using the RRS with Appendix SY invoked. As such, the race committee's intent is to ensure that the two fleets do not interact. In the unlikely event that yachts from the two fleets do come together, Appendix SY will be in effect for all yachts. PC recognizes it is an unusual circumstance, however, it is one that will happen at other regattas in the future and will ultimately need to be resolved and accounted for in Appendix SY.

### **Obboard Safety / Safety Officer (Exhibit I)**

PC remarks that the Safety Officer requirement is one topic that has received plenty of discussion recently. He says that having a Safety Officer on the radio is a good thing - these individuals are dedicated to communicating with other yachts. PC comments that he has been reviewing the Safety Officer forms that have been submitted for the Bucket, and suggests that many of the forms are incomplete with as many as half lacking in the racing rules requirement. PC recognizes that the requirement is strenuous calling for knowledge of, current use of, and experience with the RRS. He then presents a suggestion that has come up in recent discussion – and that is to ease off on the rules portion of the Safety Officer requirement, knowing that most yachts have a ‘racing tactician’ onboard and thus have the Safety Officer be more of a communications officer. The Safety Officer would be relaying information from the tactician (as is often the case). This led to PC's next point regarding Boat Captains. PC stresses the fact that the Boat Captain is legally charged with the safety of the yacht whether cruising or racing. That individual legally has final say and authority on the safe operation of the yacht and in fact has the authority to override the racing tactician or anyone else onboard. That being said, he recognizes that not all yacht owners, tacticians or crew are clear on that point. PC then puts out the question: what better person to be the Safety Officer than the Captain? Working together with the racing tactician and navigator, communicating directly with the other yachts in proximity and then being in a position to make any final decision should he determine the yacht is at risk or in extremis. PC opens the discussion up to the audience.

Tony Brookes (Captain of Athos) asks the question if PC is suggesting the Captain be the Safety Officer?

PC responds explaining his thinking is that perhaps we should not be requiring that the Safety Officer be someone who is absolutely current with the racing rules because that would eliminate the Boat Captain in many instances.

Jonathan Kline (Captain of P2) expresses his thoughts that it's not that the Captain *must* be the Safety Officer, but the Captain shouldn't be excluded from being the Safety Officer. He states the debate his crew has had over this issue and an argument is that some Captains have many other duties and responsibilities that might distract them from the sole responsibility of Safety Officer. He agrees with PC's explanation and assessment now.

An unidentified attendee expressed the point that the captain is legally the Safety Officer anyway so he is going to override any tactician or other person. Having one additional "Safety Officer" is only going to make it safer.

Peter Wilson expresses his concern that the Captain has too many responsibilities to be the Safety Officer. If the captain is distracted by something else happening on the boat, he is not able to operate as the Safety Officer as required while racing.

PC expresses his agreement with all points made and mentions that is why the issue has gone full circle in his view. If there is a technical issue with the yacht, which the Captain may be pulled away to resolve, who is communicating with the fleet? PC states that it is also an issue to be levying a requirement that is apparently not being met by most programs. This is the reality.

An unidentified attendee disagrees and feels we should stick with the requirement as stated on the Safety Officer form and get fully qualified people in the Safety Officer position.

Barry Houghton agrees that the Boat Captain is an ideal Safety Officer.

An unidentified attendee stated that at the end of the day the Boat Captain is only one guy, so no matter what he is doing, having two guys do the same job is better for safety. Ideally you would have a second opinion. In complex situations, having someone help the Captain with some decisions is a good idea.

Kate Branagh states that the Boat Captain in some instances is driving. PC clarifies that the requirement states that one cannot drive if he is the Safety Officer.

PC states that we must press on – there is more to cover. The issue regarding Safety Officer and the Boat Captain is one that the Onboard Safety Committee will make a top priority in the coming months. He encourages the meeting attendees to check out the SYRA website where there are two resumes posted of people we are confident are qualified Safety Officers. Ideally that list will grow providing options for Boat Captains putting their teams together.

Adam Bateman (*Unfurled*) suggests having a meeting with all Safety Officers before the racing starts (like this) to go over the rules.

PC concurs and reminds everyone about the SYRA sponsored Rules Review Session that will happen tomorrow morning at 0830 with Jim Capron (ISAF judge and member of the ISAF Racing Rules Committee). Jim will cover those parts of the RRS and Appendix SY that appear to be confusing people.

PC states that we (event organizers and members of the SYRA) need to come together as a group and ensure that there is a qualified, experienced Juror who can handle any protests, provide rules clarification and ultimately offer a rules session as we attempt to expand the educational component of the SYRA. It is important that this individual be experienced or at least familiar with superyacht racing, based on how quickly things have evolved over the past few years.

Tony Brookes suggests mandating that the Safety Officers we are concerned about go to these meetings/seminars.

PC recognizes this as a good point and suggests we consider going a step further and make it mandatory for all Safety Officers.

Robbie Doyle suggests going back to the Captains of the yachts who have submitted the Safety Officer forms and let them know what is lacking and what more you'd like to see in a perfect world.

PC agrees that event organizers need to do a better job in this area. One problem is that some Safety Officer forms are being submitted at registration with some yachts picking someone out the existing crew to fill the role. One improvement would be to require the form be turned in well in advance (just like the handicap applications) so we can look at them ahead of time and know that the entrants are taking the requirement seriously. PC suggests that this needs to be a requirement in all future NORs.

Adam Bateman agrees we are making progress and making the racing safer all the time, but heaven forbid something bad happen. Can we unwind it? Are these choices we are making here valid? We need to make sure we have bases covered and be ready for a worse case scenario. If you unwind situations and look at who made the call, was he allowed to?

Robbie Doyle recognizes all of the issues raised and that we could have this discussion for days. The one indisputable fact is what Tony said - the Captain is still the ultimate Safety Officer legally.

PC agrees we have certainly made it safer, but that there is still much more work to be done in this area.

### **Fair Racing / Handicapping (Exhibit K)**

PC explains one of the centerpieces of the SYRA is fair sailing. During the first year our focus was on safe racing, but we are making great progress on fair sailing initiatives lately. One of the



ways we (the Bucket Regattas) attempt to enhance fair sailing is in spending a considerable amount of time and effort on ‘class breaks’.

PC directs the attendees’ attention to Exhibit K, which shows some of what the organizer is looking at when considering class breaks. It is more than simply the yacht’s speed or LOA. We look at displacement, sail area - upwind and down, SA/Displacement Ratios, etc. There is a five-person panel that looks at all the numbers, ratios, and factors. The preliminary breaks are then posted well ahead of time and emailed to all Boat Captains. PC is happy to report that there was not a lot of controversy or debate. He recommends all event organizers post the class breaks in advance - we are all trying to keep the yacht owners happy and allow all entrants sufficient time to think this through in advance and avoid having a contentious class break debate at the Captains Briefing. PC recognizes it is a more difficult challenge with smaller fleets, which ultimately leads to very disparate yachts racing against one another.

PC announces that last year and the year before, approximately half of the superyacht regattas were using the IRC rating rule. Event Organizers for the first four regattas this year have gone with the International Super Yacht Rule (ISYR). Now the organizer has the ability to use several different applications of the ISYR.

- At the Antigua and Bucket regattas, a pursuit-racing format was used with the first yacht in class finishing being the winner. The starting sequence is determined by the yacht’s VPP taking into account the projected wind speed and direction and the course configuration. The ISYR takes into account how much reaching, running and beating the fleet will be doing as well as the wind speed in determining the starting sequence.
- At the Loro Piana Caribbean SuperYacht Regatta in Virgin Gorda a different application of the ISYR was in play. A staggered start format was used. And the ISYR 3-number system was in play using three declared handicaps for light, medium, and heavy wind speeds. The race committee made the wind speed declaration before the first boat started. This ISYR application did not use a predicted wind direction or course configuration, but instead depended on a circular random system that called for an equal amount of reaching, running and beating for the time on time handicapping.

PC acknowledges that the rating or handicap rule to be used is the event organizer’s call, but that they need to be knowledgeable about what they have selected and should take the time to email all entrants with the appropriate details so they’re up to speed. We event organizers, need to do a better job of educating all concerned about what application of ISYR is in play now that there are various options available.

SYRA has been very active and involved with the ISYR rule authority, and they have been very open and cooperative regarding our concerns about fair racing. The rule authority has enacted a number of changes to what was the ‘Bucket Rule’ (now ISYR) which includes more transparency and working with the event organizers with the goal of providing more fair racing. PC recommends that, as you race throughout the year, be sure you are clear about what application of the ISYR is in play – the more everyone knows about the handicap rule, the less misinformation and confusion, which will mean happier yacht owners. We have made great gains, but there is still work to do.

Greg Butler-Davis (Captain *Panthalassa*) asks a question about ratings. *Panthalassa* is a 56m Perini Navi along with three other yachts sailing in the fleet. How do you determine which of these four identical yachts starts first? We all have the same physical characteristics. He states that he spoke with people at Perini Navi who have been advising on measurement information on the yacht. Does the ISYR handicapping take into account quality of sails, ability of crew, age of sails, etc. Is this how you are determining the start times?

Before turning it over to Jim Teeters from ISYR to answer your specific question, PC mentions that last year there were four J Class yachts here at the Bucket who raced with the pursuit fleet. Handicaps were very similar so each day the yachts switched starting positions. It might not have been the right answer, but it was perceived to be fair.

Jim Teeters (ISYR) explains the rule relies on the declared measurement information in the handicap application provided by the Boat Captain and often times yacht designer and sail maker. The Perini Navi 56 metre entries have different declared sail area, different displacements, and different drafts of boards that come down. These boats have never been the “same” in the system. Many of the design offices give me a spreadsheet of all the design details of all their boats and their characteristics. It’s very helpful for sorting out differences among boats. Jim Teeters suggests talking with Perini Navi about the details reported by the Boat Captains in the application, but that he has to rely on the data provided. *(Note: Since the spring meeting, Perini Navi is now working with ISYR to provide accurate information on all of the Perini Navi yachts that are actively racing).*

Greg Butler-Davis states it seems illogical that all the boats are different.

Bill Tripp strongly believes all the boats have big differences. From displacement, spinnakers, sail areas, how the boats are laid out, etc.

PC mentions that Jim Teeters and John Winder from the ISYR are here in St Barths this week to get out on the water and observe the yachts first hand. They will be available after the meeting and throughout the weekend to answer questions you might have. A key point is, that the more accurate the information they get, the better it is for fair sailing.

PC notes that we are out of time and thanks everyone for taking time from your busy schedules to attend. The turnout and enthusiasm here demonstrates the importance of SYRA and is one of the reasons we are moving forward and making progress. Have a great week on the water and thanks again for coming. We are here to answer any questions - hope to see you at the AGM in Monaco.

Ed Dubois thanks Peter for a good meeting and everyone for taking time to come by and participate.

Meeting ends.