

## Basic Needs for Running a Match Race

Dave Perry

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Here is a list of the basic necessities for running match races.

The basic terminology and some useful information is as follows:

A match race (two boats) is called a “Match”

When two or more Matches are run back-to-back, usually with a rolling start, they are called a “Flight”

Typically, a match racing event begins with a Round Robin, with each team racing each other once. If time permits, typically either a second Round Robin is raced, or the top teams compete in a knock-out series (Quarter’s, Semi’s and Finals type format; and the next four can compete in a similar format for places 5-8).

All the Matches in the Flight are raced on the same race course.

Match race events have been known to run as many as five (5) Matches in one Flight.

A typical match race takes around 16-18 minutes; a Flight typically takes around 25 minutes plus 5 additional minutes for each additional Match in that Flight. For instance, if there were four (4) Matches in a Flight, figure the Flight will take 40 minutes to complete (25 plus (3x5)).

Assuming the fleet of boats being used is relatively even, there is no need to change boats between races. Boats can be rotated once between Round Robins if a rotation is desired. Boats can be exchanged in the Semi’s and Finals rounds after each odd race, if desired. Obviously, rotating/changing boats is a big time eater.

All the Match Racing rules for competitors and race management are in Section C of *The Racing Rules of Sailing*.

A great resource for learning more about Match Racing is North U’s CD entitled “Match Racing” and Dave Perry’s Match Racing Playbook, available on the North U website.

The final resource that needs to be on the shelf of any team that match races is the ISAF Umpire Call Book for Match Racing, which can be viewed and downloaded at:

[http://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/MatchRacingCallBook20092012-\[6635\].pdf](http://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/MatchRacingCallBook20092012-[6635].pdf)

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## Basic Race Management Needs for Running a Match Race

1 race committee boat (2 people) – this boat stays on station for the entire race

4 racing marks (preferably 2 being a different color from the other 2)

1 mark set / repair / safety boat (1-2 people)

1 umpire boat per pair of boats that could be racing at one time (1-2 umpires per boat)

suitable flags and horns (see below)

### Flags

Flags are part of the formal starting system, and are also used to signal a course change. However, if you want to reduce the use of flags, that is fine, and accommodations can be made in the SI's.

If a race committee wanted to use the appropriate flags, it would need:

Flag F, flag P, numeral pennants 1-5, and a Yellow and Blue flag – the Yellow and Blue need to be on sticks. It would also need the usual AP and N flag for postponing and abandoning a race.

If it wanted the ability to send a match to a different windward mark, it would also need:

Flag C and two flags or placards the colors of the two marks that could be used as a windward mark.

The mark set boat would preferably have:

The second windward mark in case the wind shifts (note, in match racing, only the windward mark is ever shifted, and usually it is preset to allow the mark set boat to be at the leeward mark to signal the change); plus flag C and a flag the color of the two marks that could be used as a windward mark.

### Horns

If the RC boat had an Ollie for the starting sequence...great. But the Ollie needs to be able to make sound signals at 5, 4 and Go. The RC boat also needs a horn (preferred to a whistle cause the umpires use a whistle) to make a sound at the Attention Signal (usually 7 minutes before the first start...unless the Ollie can do that too!

The mark set boat needs a horn if it is going to signal a course change.

### Marks

The race course is windward-leeward twice around, marks to starboard, finish downwind across the start/finish line.

So, the starting line is between the RC boat and the starting mark. The same line is the finishing line. Then there is a windward mark and a leeward mark. The leeward mark is set just to windward of the starting line. The key is that the starting mark and the leeward mark need to be different in color or shape, otherwise it is very confusing to the sailors. The windward and leeward marks can be the same or different; that doesn't matter.

The fourth mark is the spare windward mark, for sending some or all matches to a new windward mark when the wind shifts. Often, the second windward mark (different color from the original mark) is pre-set to the side of the original windward mark that the wind is likely to shift towards. Then, it is a simple matter of just signaling the boats to use the other windward mark if needed.

## Other Basic Needs for the Race Boats and Umpire Boats

Each race boat needs to have a way to be clearly identified as the Yellow boat or the Blue boat. Flags or streamers on the backstay are the most common. If the boat doesn't have a backstay, flags or streamers on the leech of the mainsail, high enough so they don't foul in the mainsheet block, is preferred. In some fleets, the Yellow and Blue flag are both attached to the backstay before the event begins, and the one not being used in a race is simply taped closed.

Each boat also needs to have a Y flag (doesn't need to be large, but does need to be on a stick)

Each boat should have a red flag, that can also be used as a breakdown flag. That flag can be attached to the backstay or side shroud as appropriate.

While on the subject of race boats, I strongly encourage fleets to "pin" their travelers in the middle. Travelers are not needed for good match racing, and playing them is a nuisance, distraction and it gives sailors familiar with those particular boats a large advantage. I also suggest putting a knot in the boom vang at some medium setting to avoid heavy vanging in a breeze and risk of booms snapping in pre-start gybing, or around windward marks, etc. As long as the boats are even, the racing is great! And breakdowns are a major cause of losing time in a match race event!

## Umpire boats

Figure one (1) boat per Match (pair of boats). If you have the luxury of more, that is fine, but not required.

Best if the boats are in the 16-20 foot range (whalers, RIB's, etc.)...4-stroke engines are preferred

Each boat needs a PVC "flag holder" tied in somehow. (The umpire flags are on wooden dowels or PVC thinner pipe)

Each boat needs a VHF radio (which the umpires often bring themselves)

Each boats needs a set of umpire flags and whistle (again, which the umpires often bring themselves)

A set of umpire flags (flags on a wooden dowel or thin PVC pipe) includes:

Note: It saves a lot of mistakes if you tape or paint each stick with the color of the flag on that stick!

2 Yellow flags

2 Blue flags

1 Green, or Green & White (set up like an L flag), flag

1 Red flag

1 Black flag

NOTE: Clearly the number of powerboats needed for the umpiring / race management is a significant difference in running match races. Concessions will have to be made at some events. If short, the umpires may have to help with signaling a course change (verbally); which is much easier if there are a couple options for a windward mark already set.

## Umpires

Preferably two (2) to a boat, but one umpire can do it alone if needed.