

Umpire Observation

Appendix UF was developed from Addendum Q which itself was originally developed from medal racing, where a final decision was required at the finishing line for the TV and media. We are pleased to say that Appendix UF has since proven to be extremely popular. However, in recent years, the International Umpires Subcommittee (IUSC) has noted an increase in events utilizing Appendix UF for events with very large fleets of boats.

While the growth of umpired fleet racing is a very positive development, the IUSC is concerned that the Appendix UF is now being used with fleets far larger than it was ever designed to be used for. In some cases, we have seen events attempt to umpire fleets of 60, 70 or 80 boats with this appendix.

Appendix UF is intended to be used at events where the resources allow for all on-the-water incidents to receive a decision from the umpires. It is not suitable for large fleets as it does not provide boats with any recourse for an incident that goes unseen by the umpires. This causes a fundamental unfairness to arise where the penalty available to a boat depends on whether the umpires saw the incident or not. Of course, in a large fleet, it is far more likely an incident will not be seen with no further action possible. This is not desirable if we want to encourage rules compliance.

At the 2024 Annual Conference, the IUSC discussed this issue and is of the view that the WS Racing Rules Committee (RRC) should restrict the use of Appendix UF to only small fleets of boats. We suggest that a suitable limit is 20-25 boats and/or where the ratio of umpires to boats is no greater than 1:4. However we defer to RRC to decide the exact limit.

Of course, this would then require an option where some of the racing is observed by umpires and opinions regarding incidents are promptly communicated to boats.

Below are clauses that we recommend the organisers of large fleet umpired fleets include in the NoR or SI's for a regatta to allow for limited on-water rules enforcement. These clauses provide a process where an umpire who observes an incident can signal what their opinion is in regarding rule compliance. The sailors continue to use the standard rules regarding protests and hearing procedures but if the incident was observed by the umpires, they will know what that independent witness thought of the incident. Importantly, the decisions of the umpires become advisory, and a boat is not subject to a penalty, the quantum of which is determined by whether the umpires saw the incident or not. The aim is that this provides a option for organisers that cannot afford the resources for 'full umpiring' without compromising the fairness of the event.

Our understanding is that this set of SIs does not require the approval of World Sailing, nor of an MNA, and may be used freely by event organisers.

Insert new Sailing Instruction No. X as follows:

X Umpire Observation

- X.1 Umpires may observe the racing and provide advisory umpire signals. If an umpire observes an incident where a boat protests, one of the following signals may be made:
- (a) A green and white flag with one long sound means ‘The umpires saw the incident and believe that no rule was broken’.
 - (b) A red flag with one long sound means ‘The umpires saw the incident and believe that one or more boat has broken a rule’. The umpires will hail or signal each boat identified to have broken a rule.
 - (c) A “J” flag with one long sound means ‘The umpires do not have the facts to make a decision’.
- X.2 The signals displayed by the umpires are for information only. If a red flag is displayed, any identified boat is not obliged to take the applicable penalty, however if she does not, the Umpire, as part of the protest committee, may protest that boat. If a green and white flag or the “J” flag is displayed, a boat may still protest, or a boat may choose to take the applicable penalty.
- X.3 If a green and white flag is displayed for an incident, the protest committee will only protest a boat for an incident involving her that may have resulted in injury or serious damage, or if the protest committee learns during the hearing of a valid protest that the boat, although not a party to the hearing, was involved in the incident and may have broken a rule. This changes RRS 60.1 and 60.4(b).