

LA28 Olympic Format Selection Criteria

The World Sailing Board endorsed this paper in their October 2025 meeting.

1. Context

Sailing's value to the Olympic Movement has declined as evidenced by the reduction in athlete quota since 2008 from 400 to 330. Whilst sailing does well for universality and heritage, its media and spectator metrics offer considerable opportunity for growth, and it is complex to understand on the screen. With decreasing audience numbers and viewing hours, sailing needs to make transformational change to bring broadcasters back to the sport so that audiences may absorb the brilliance of sailing's athletes and the sport itself.

To maximise the athlete quota assigned to Olympic Sailing, World Sailing must increase sailings value to the Olympic Movement by increasing the number of people who watch Olympic Sailing and for the duration of their engagement. The World Sailing Board set management this objective under its Olympic Transition Project; format is an integral component of that project.

The IOC conditions to its allocation of athlete quota to retain 330 athletes to sailing for LA28 as set out below. These conditions are targeted at the cost and complexity of the delivering the Olympic Sailing Competition from the perspective of an organising committee seeking to increase the value sailing offers the Olympic Movement.

Whilst the first four conditions have already been agreed by Council and the last point is on track to be addressed by the Events Committee, World Sailing should keep the concept of 'simple to deliver' at the forefront of its decision making, as follows:

1. Shorten the opening series by removing at least 20 per cent of the races and scheduling the remaining races over three days for all events, while retaining one dedicated medal day per event.
2. Align with LA28 and OBS on the optimal distribution of races and competition days across the Games window – including the potential to begin before the Opening Ceremony – to minimise the event footprint and resource requirements.
3. Reduce the target time for dinghy races to enhance the broadcast impact and allow for a more compact competition schedule.
4. Ensure a joint decision by LA28, World Sailing and OBS on whether more than one contingency day per event is required, based on the specific conditions of the field of play and the overall competition schedule.
5. Further streamline operations and enhance efficiency by reviewing and reducing the number of support boats (sic) required, minimising container use, reviewing official training time and venue access, and encouraging equipment sharing.

2. The objective

To increase the number of people who watch and how long they watch there are two elements to be influenced:

1. The availability of the sport to watch. This translates to making the sport appealing and straight forward for broadcasters to schedule on their channels when compared to the other Olympic disciplines.
2. The sport is entertaining to watch and otherwise engage with. This translates to retaining an audience to watch multiple races and engaging in more than the race that decides the medals.

The Athletes' Committee, Events Committee, Council and the broader sailing community are looking for criteria to define and evaluate Olympic Sailing Competition format proposals, and ensure the final format(s) selected are in the best interest of the sport and World Sailing has a whole.

3. LA28 Olympic Sailing Competition Format Selection Criteria

The following list of criteria is presented as a guide to the formation, evaluation and selection of a format(s) for the LA28 Olympic Sailing Competition. Any proposed format should be evaluated against the criteria outlined below, in the order of importance:

Mandatory

1. Predictability

- a. The competition schedule must have a reliable start and finish time for each race, avoiding General Recalls and race restarts.
- b. The race that determines which competitors progress to the Medal Series can be identified in the competition schedule.
- c. The race that determines the medallists can be identified in the competition schedule.

2. Maximum medal opportunities

- a. Maximise the number of nations that have a realistic probability of winning a medal in the last race (e.g., minimum 20% probability).
- b. Maximise the number of nations that have a realistic probability to qualify to the last race (e.g., minimum 20% probability).
- c. The scoring system is designed to minimise probability that finalists in the Medal Series and medallists are determined before the last race of the of the Opening Series and Medal Series respectively

Important – listed in order of priority

3. Simple Excitement

- a. The format is simple to explain and understand
- b. Each race is exciting and compelling to watch

- c. It is intuitive to understanding who is winning and why
- 4. Performance rewarded
 - a. Strong performance throughout the regatta increases the chance of winning
 - b. Strong performance throughout the opening series increases the chance of progress to the medal series
 - c. Strong performance throughout the medal series increases the chance of winning

Principles to be addressed

- 5. Acknowledges sailing's fundamental nature
 - a. Sailing is inherently shaped by nature and changing conditions
 - b. 'Negative' tactics due to an overly protected own position are prevented
 - c. A format that requires the use of a broad range of sailing skills
- 6. Practical to deliver across the international Olympic Class racing
 - a. Scalable, particularly the qualification phase, to encourage participation at large multi-fleet regattas
 - b. Uses resource that are reasonable for an international or a major regional regatta to acquire
 - c. Maintains the universal nature of the sport to maximise participation through affordable regattas