Mullingar Sailing Club LOUGH OWEL

Race Officer Duties and Responsibilities

Introduction

This document describes the roles of the Race Officer (RO), assisted by the Safety Boat Crew (SBC), at club racing times (Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons).

Each member, in becoming a member of the Club, agrees to act as either RO or SBC. Each member is requested to perform this duty once or twice a year as part of their contribution to the running of the Club. On other days they can then benefit from others taking responsibility. Members usually assist as SBC initially as they gain experience. Mullingar Sailing Club aims to run RO briefing sessions periodically. This document provides the basic information required to perform the duty appropriately, please suggest any additions to the Fleet Captain.

The primary goal of the RO is to ensure the safe and orderly running of club races and to provide rescue boat cover for recreational (non-racing) sailors. If it is your first time (or you feel a bit rusty) as RO, contact the Fleet Captain and he/she will try and ensure that you have help from an experienced club member. If there are any situations in which the RO does not feel competent to make a decision, s/he should seek the advice from a committee member or an appropriately qualified or experienced member and agree a course of action. However, the RO is the ultimate decision maker on the conduct of racing on the day.

Safety Responsibilities

The safety duties of the Race Officer, assisted by the SBC, include the following:

- Check the weather forecast; When there is a gale warning in the area for the period of racing, racing should be cancelled and rescue boats should not be launched, except in an emergency;
- Brief the SBC as regards duties and what is required;
- Report any safety incidents and/or deficiencies in equipment to the a member of the club committee;

Sailors sail at their own risk, however if you, the RO, feel it is unsafe to sail or you are not able to provide adequate safety cover then abandon the race.

Whilst you should focus significant effort on organisation of racing, it is important to recognise that recreational sailing must have adequate attention. The RO and SBC safety boat crew should look out for recreational sailors needing help as much as racing sailors. Sailors needing assistance (whether racing or not) must always take priority over running races.

Before Going on the Water

Safety Boat Checklist – Before Launching

- Check tubes are sufficiently inflated. Pump up (using electric blower) if needed.
- Check drainage bung(s) at transom is/are installed
- Check for propeller damage
- Check for sufficient fuel in fuel tank. Swap out for a full(er) tank from the fuel store if needed.
- Check that all of the following are present:
    - Kill cord
    - Marks, lines and weights
        - 3 rounding marks with lines and weights
        - Start line pin end mark with line and weight
    - Racing flags:
        - Class flag (solid yellow)
        - Preparatory or “P” flag (blue with white rectangle insert)
        - Finish line flag (solid blue).
    - Digital stopwatch, results notebook and pencil (in lunchbox)
    - Rescue boat anchor and line
    - 2 Paddles
    - Fire extinguisher
    - Tow rope ready for use
    - Recovery ladder
    - Boat hook
- Check operation of air horn
- Bring a mobile phone, in case it is needed in an emergency.
- Wear appropriate clothing. The safety boat crew and helm should be prepared to get into the water in case sailors need assistance in the water or with righting a capsized boat.
- Confirm with rescue boat partner who is going to be helm and who will be crew. Helm must have received adequate power boat training.
- Seek advice from a committee member or an appropriately qualified or experienced member if need help setting a course or if you are unsure about any of the RO responsibilities.

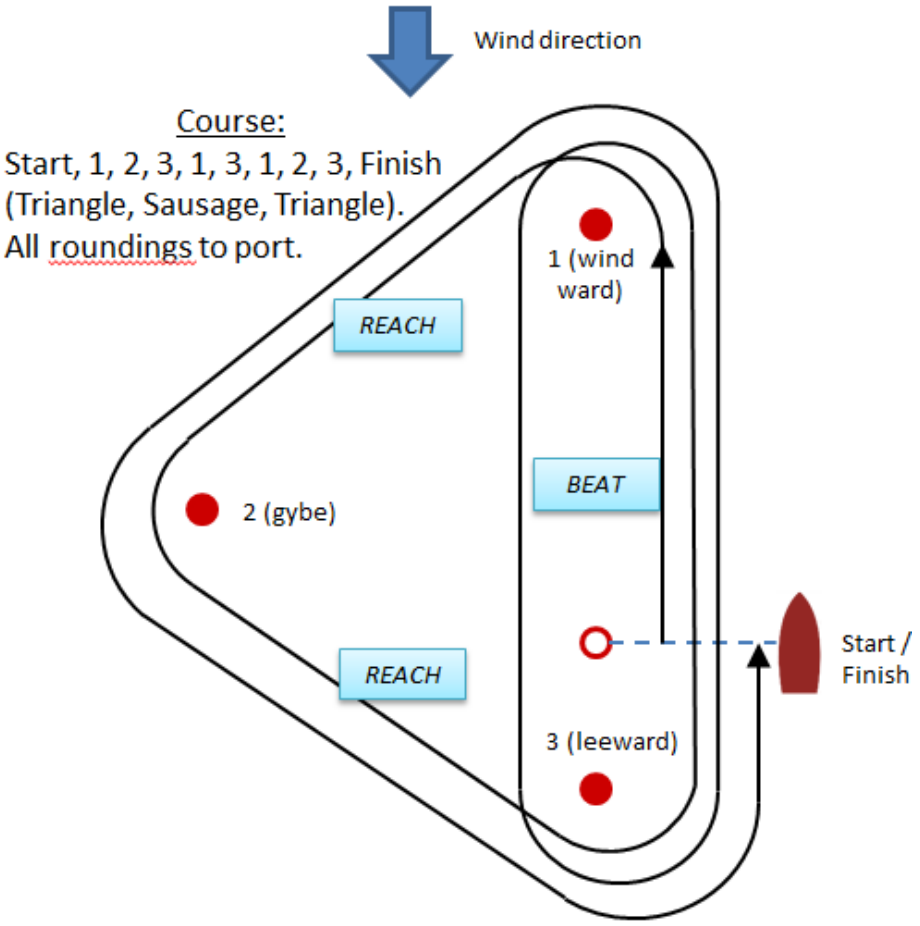
Safety Boat Checklist – After Launching

- Attach kill cord around your thigh prior to starting engine. Test that the kill cord works.
- Check that the engine is pumping cooling water and that the steering is OK.

How to Set a Course and Run a Race

Course Used

A triangular course is normally used, as shown below.



Laying a Course

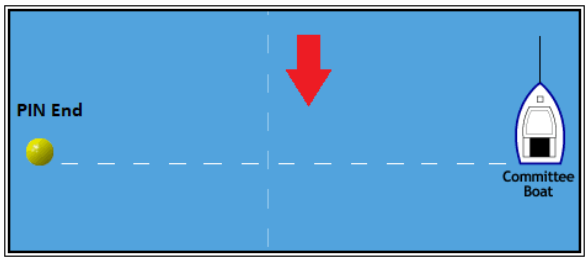
1. Get out into the sailing area at least 30 minutes before the start time.
2. Stop the boat and ensure it is stationary. Raise a flag to determine the average wind direction. Wind direction may well be different to the direction at the clubhouse.
3. Plan the approximate locations of all marks. Ensure that windward marks will not be close to shore or islands and that no marks are in shallows.
4. Motor to the planned leeward mark (3) position and drop it.
    - Dropping marks:
        - Use depth gauge on rib to ensure that there is more than enough line for the mark anchor to reach the lake bottom (or it will drift).
        - Hold line and drop mark anchor, letting the anchor line unwind as it sinks. You should feel the anchor line pressure ease as the mark anchor hits the bottom.
        - The mark should lie to one side when released. If the mark sits straight up (i.e. anchor line is vertical and taut), then the anchor is not on the bottom, and the mark will drift. Lift the mark and drop it in shallower water. Also, the weight may not unwind from the line cleanly. The above check will verify it has reached the bottom.
5. Motor directly upwind to the approximate windward mark position. Stop the boat and raise a flag. Check that the leeward mark is directly downwind. Adjust position for wind direction and depth as needed, and then drop the windward mark (1). The required distance of the beat can be difficult to judge and is dependent on wind strength. Deciding this distance becomes easier when the racing boats arrive at the

race area to give perspective. Better to lay too long than too short as the race can always be shortened by eliminating one of the legs.

6. Motor half-way down the beat, then turn right 90°. Motor to planned position of gybe mark. Gybe should be the same distance from windward and leeward marks, and each leg of the triangle should be approximately the same length. Check and adjust position as needed (also checking depth), then drop the mark.

Setting the Starting Line

1. The starting line should be approximately 1/3 of the way up the beat, and at 90° to the wind direction. The committee boat should be on the starboard end of the line.
2. The length of the starting line is roughly determined by the number of boats times their length. For example, 10 x GP14s need a 140ft (43m) line. In lighter winds the line can be shorter and in strong winds a longer line helps prevent collisions.
3. Drop the pin end of the line first. Then position the committee boat at the other end of the start line getting the start line length correct first then position roughly square to the wind. Then motor upwind a distance over twice the depth. Drop anchor and drift downwind into the desired position keeping some anchor line in the rib. When the downward drift is complete, shorten or lengthen the anchor line to fine tune the start line position using a flag or wind indicator. Don't use the yellow flag for this purpose as this may indicate that the race has started! If you see that the start line has a significant bias, raise the anchor and adjust your position.



4. If in doubt about your course, ask boats arriving early to the racing area if they are satisfied with your course.

The Start Sequence

Use the digital stopwatch for the countdown.

Stage	Time to Start	Sound	Flag
Warning	5 minutes	1 x hoot	
Preparatory	4 minutes	1 x hoot	
One-minute	1 minute	1 x hoot	
Starting	0 minutes	1 x hoot	

- Individual recall: For our small club races, raising an individual recall flag isn't needed. Sound 1 hoot on the horn and call out the helm name(s) or sail number(s). Offending boats must return and re-start by crossing below the starting line to restart.
- General recall: Sound 2 hoots on the horn. Wait for all boats to return, and then recommence the start sequence.
- If you need to cancel the start sequence (e.g. hazardous conditions, significant change in wind direction requiring changes to course, lack of wind such that boats cannot make way, or a messed-up start sequence),

drop all flags and sound the horn 3 times. Then recommence the start sequence approximately 1 minute later, or once the problem has been resolved.

The Finish

- Each race should be 35-40 minutes from the start for the first boat to finish.
- Finish line is usually the same as the start line. If committee boat needs to move during race (e.g. provide assistance to sailors), detach boat from anchor buoy, and reattach on return.
- Raise blue flag to signify finish line just before leading boat rounds the last mark prior to finish.
- Course may be shortened, usually at windward or leeward mark, if race is taking too long (e.g. wind drops). Motor to a position to starboard of the mark, drop anchor, and raise blue flag just before the leading boat rounds the previous mark.
- Sound horn as each boat crosses the finish line. Record positions of finishers (sail number and/or helm and crew name) and return results to Fleet Captain.

Other Points to Note

- If the wind shifts significantly during a race, consider moving the marks before the second race.

Mistakes to Avoid

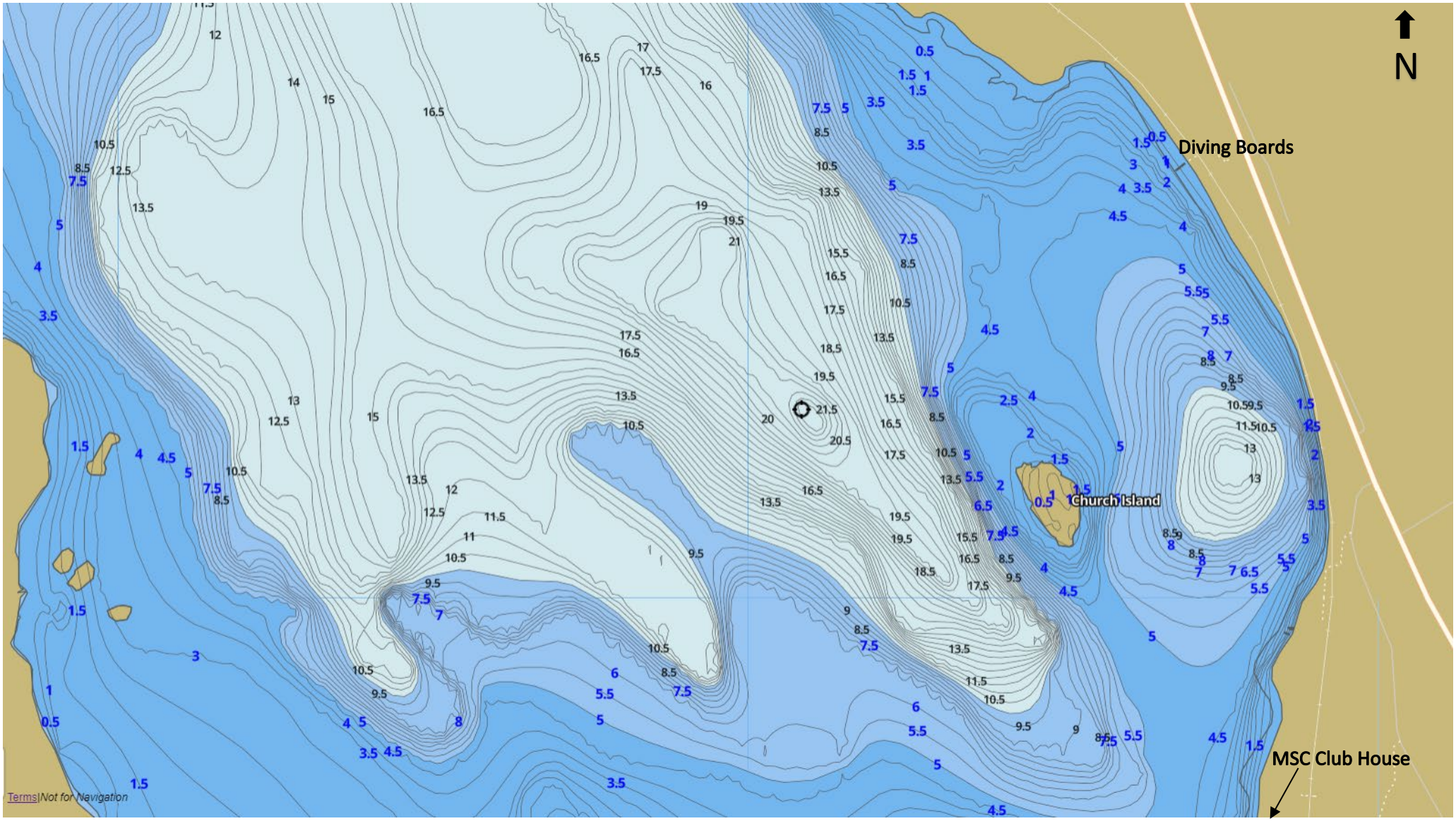
- Not allowing enough time to set course before race start time.
- Launching committee boat without all necessary race and rescue equipment
- Setting marks too close to shore, islands or shallows.
- Dropping marks in water that is too deep (anchor line not long enough)
- Marks in wrong places (beat is not to windward, reaches become beats or runs). Sometimes this is bad luck – when wind direction changes after course is laid.
- Gybe mark is laid on wrong side of beat (starboard course instead of port course)

Racing Area


Church Island,
Lough Owel
RACE AREA
Lough
SHALLOWS
Lady's Island
Lough Owel Lodg
SHALLOWS
Mullingar Sailing Club
Cullion
Lough Owel Car Park
Lough Owel
Pitch And Putt
Google
200 m
Imagery ©2022 CNES / Airbus, Maxar Technologies, Map data ©2022
Ireland
3D Earth view is not available
Terms

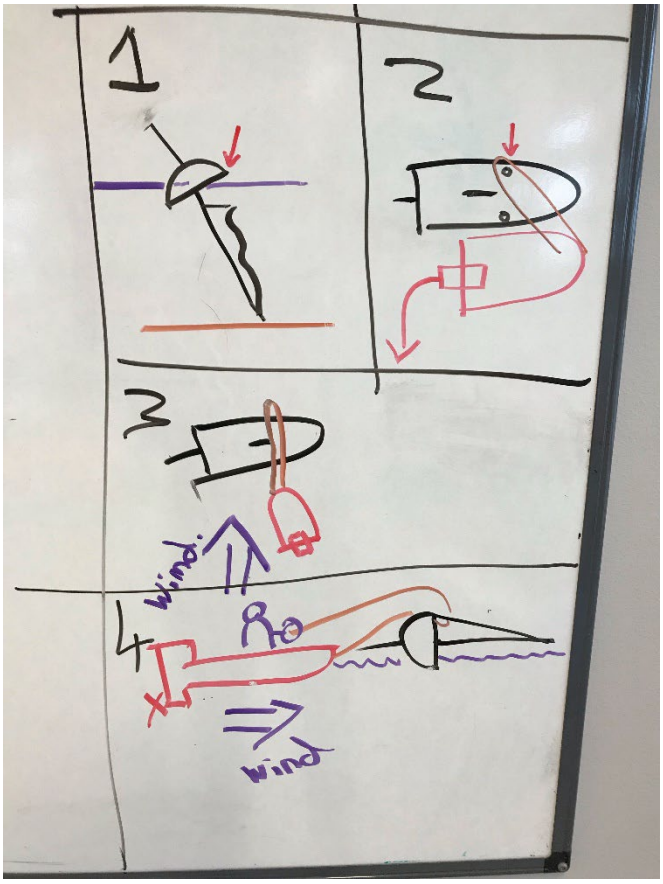
Lough Owel Bathymetry (depths in metres)

Map source: https://fishing-app.gpsnauticalcharts.com/



Helping Capsized Sailors

- When approaching a capsized boat, do this at slow speed bow-to-bow, and ensure that you know where the sailors are.
- First establish that all sailors are present and OK i.e. not caught in rigging, injured etc. Count heads. Remember some Mirrors will sail 3 to a boat.
- Sailors may not require assistance to right their boat and would be happier if the safety boat was not brought too close. Communicate with the persons involved.
- If a sailor is having trouble getting onto the centreboard, consider recovering the helm into your boat so you can put him/her onto the centreboard
- When near people in the water, stop & switch off the engine
- Before trying to help right a boat, ask the sailors to release the main and jib sheets to reduce the risk of the boat capsizing again after righting.
- To help right a 2-sailed boat (e.g. GP14, Mirror) on its side, grab the mast tip. Then walk your hands back down the mast lifting as you go. As you lift the mast, try to rotate the boat by pushing/pulling until it is facing into the wind. There should be no need to drive/use the engine. Boats are easier to recover and more likely to remain upright when pointing into the wind.
- To help right an inverted 2-sailed boat, grab the bow of the boat. Walk your hands up the front edge of the jib towards the mast tip, lifting the rigging until it is flat on the water. Once at the mast tip, walk your hands back down the mast lifting as you go.
- If a mast is stuck in weeds or mud and the sailors cannot right it, follow these steps (as shown in the figure).



2. Bring the safety boat alongside the windward side of the capsized hull. Loop a tow line around this shroud where it meets the deck on this higher side and bring the tow line back across the upturned hull into the safety boat. This may require the help of a sailor in the water on the leeward side of the capsized boat.
3. Hold the free end of the tow line while reversing the safety boat slowly away from the upturned hull into the wind. Keep the shroud and mast of the upturned hull and the and bow of the rescue boat in a straight line to avoid bending the mast.
4. Once the mast is free, and as the boat comes up, try to manoeuvre it so that it points into the wind.

- If you need to tow a disabled boat, leave one sailor on the boat. Hand the sailor a tow rope and instruct him/her to wrap it once fully around the mast. The sailor should lift the centreboard fully and sit towards the stern of the disabled boat so that he/she can steer while in tow. For safety, the helm should hold the tow rope so that he/she can let go of it at any time.
- Remember people are more important than equipment, if sailors are cold, tired or injured, take them straight to shore and abandon their boat. Ensure everyone knows the boat is abandoned and the sailors are ashore.

Useful Videos

- Swanage Sailing Club Safety Training Video: https://youtu.be/OuMJ2ExA79k
  - 0m 27s: Righting a boat by towing into wind
  - 1m 19s: Righting a boat by lifting the mast
  - 1m 40s: Towing a disabled boat
  - 4m 40s: Righting a larger boat with a rope
- RYA: ENTRAPMENT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY - Top Tips for Preventing Entrapment when Dinghy Sailing https://youtu.be/Qo1JMpkQ78A

Safety Boat Checklist On Shore – After Retrieval

- Remove bungs on the ramp to drain boat.
- Check for propeller damage
- Coil the rounding mark lines around their weights and stow in boat ready for next time
- Remove all personal gear, rubbish, water bottles from the boat.
- Attach battery charger to battery
- Report any equipment loss, malfunction or damage
- Write up results on the chalk board in the clubhouse, and share the race results with the Fleet Captain

Other RO Responsibilities

- Bring a litre of milk and some biscuits to the club for post-sailing tea/coffee.
- After tea/coffee, take the rubbish bag from the club for disposal in your bin. The club has no regular waste collection and this suggestion is the best workable solution to avoid accumulation of rubbish in the club.

Feedback/Suggestions

Please send any feedback or suggestions to improve this guide to the Fleet Captain.