



Inclusion on the Race Course

Good race management is good race management regardless of who is on the water. Sailing theory, rules, and tactics are the same for everyone, although physical parameters may be different when working with sailors that have a disability.

Ask disabled people how their impairments may affect their sailing rather than make an assumption. Try to talk to the participants one on one at registration or after the briefing—they may not want to raise certain issues in a group discussion.

Managing a disability is very much the responsibility of the individual concerned. However, race officials and regatta managers should be aware that:

- The briefing needs to be in an accessible location that everybody can get to.
- The bigger and brighter that marks are... the better for everybody, especially people with vision impairment.
- Some sailors may not be able to physically fix their boat, particularly people using an electronic servo as batteries may die or winches override. Keep an eye on, and in radio contact with support boats.
- Sailors may often carry VHF radios subject to restrictions in the class rules. These should be cleared with the Race Officer before racing begins.
- As a rough guide, aim for time on water to be less than 6 hours. Aim closer to five hours if the wind is sustained above 18kn, or temperatures are less than 15C or higher than 30C (one hour prior to first scheduled warning until return to dock)
- Rigging and de-rigging the boat can require a team effort; help may be needed for just stepping the mast or for the entire procedure. It is the Sailors responsibility to supervise rigging of their own boats.
- Moving around the site is an important consideration. Mud, sand, soft or slippery surfaces are difficult for the less agile. Rough terrain can be hazardous for people with visual impairment. Ensure there is an accessible route between key locations – for example rigging areas may have pedestrian zones marked out through them.

To enable sailors to manage their own needs, including food, drink and medications, it is helpful if they know how long they can expect to be on the water.

Weather conditions often dictate the comfort and fatigue levels of someone who cannot move around much in the boat, or has poor temperature control. Rough seas and strong winds can toss a boat around to such a degree that those with reduced lower limb function or trunk control spend most of their time hanging on.

Visual impairment (VI) can vary from no vision at all to a useful condition where shapes and colours can be distinguished. Once, a skipper voiced some doubt about sending a capable, blind sailor to change a sail at night in dirty weather. He was told 'It's all the same to me, mate!'



Awareness in Race Management

Many, but not all, of the sailors racing in Paralympic and Hansa class boats have a physical disability, but it is important to be aware this has no bearing on their sailing ability. Sailing ability varies quite widely, from the very capable and experienced to the novice.

Physical disabilities can include anything from paraplegia and quadriplegia, to leg or arm amputation, cerebral palsy and stroke. Some people may have difficulty with verbal communication. Sailors with an intellectual disability or multiple disabilities may also be competing in these classes. Once again, ability will vary significantly.

As the Paralympic 2.4mR, SKUD 18, Sonar and Hansa class dinghies are ballasted keelboats, sailors with a disability do not have different limitations in terms of coping with wind and water conditions in comparison with able-bodied sailors of similar sailing ability.

Due to the potential for injury of the sailor and the safety crews if transferring afloat, it is recommended that sailors with a physical disability who are injured or unwell should remain in the boat where possible, and be towed to the dock where they can be transferred ashore using a crane or hoist.

The Race Committee should give special consideration to the communication needs of sailors with physical, intellectual or sensory disabilities in regard to conveying information (ashore and afloat), and signalling afloat. When in doubt, ask the sailors what they need!

It may assist during the competitors briefing to note that sailors with right of way may need to call earlier due to the possibility of delayed reaction times, limited manoeuvrability or the visual impairment of some sailors. Also, that while the audible call of "PROTEST" is required in accordance with RRS 61; a competitor may be unable to make such a call because of disability or similar reason.

