

ISAF Change Starting



On 1st April 2001 the new ISAF Racing Rules come into force. One of the most significant changes will be to the starting procedure. Currently the rules give two systems for starting races and over the years many clubs have devised their own variations, mainly to shorten the sequence or give additional warnings. In fact even at the Sydney Olympics the organisers did their own thing and ignored the rulebook in favour of a 6, 5, 1, START sequence.

Clearly anarchy was taking over and far too much time being spent reading (and for that matter writing) sailing instructions, all before you could even start a race! So the ISAF have ruled that from now on there will only be one system: 5, 4, 1, START. Before looking at the details of the new system let's first look at the current systems, which are summarised, in the following table

Time to start	Signal	System 1	System 2
10 minutes	Warning	Class flag, 1 sound	Yellow flag, 1 sound
5 minutes	Preparatory	Flag P, 1 sound	Blue flag, 1 sound
0 minutes	Starting	Flags removed, 1 sound	Red flag, 1 sound





In system 2 each signal is removed one minute before the next is made. That is the yellow flag is lowered at 6 minutes and the blue flag at 1 minute to the start.

- 1 An immediate problem is that given a choice of two systems, which one should be used? System 1 is simpler but system 2 gives one-minute warnings of successive signals.
- 2 At many regattas and in club racing races are often run back to back and if the overall length of the start sequence could be reduced there would be less hanging around for the competitors. Also the race officer could be more responsive to the weather conditions.
- 3 Currently the use of the starting penalties (RR30) round the ends, 20% penalty and disqualification mean extra flags.

So the ISAF rules committee were tasked with the job of creating a new system, and in the best traditions of democracy, have come up with a system that has elements that should please everyone!

- 1 The sequence length is 5 minutes
- 2 Simplified flag signals - only the class flag and a preparatory or penalty flags are used.

- 3 There is a one-minute signal. (For those of you who lose track of the minutes before the start.)
- 4 Successive starts can be easily made at 5-minute intervals.
- 5 The sequence of signals is the same whether there is a penalty imposed or not.
- 6 There is no overlap required for multiple class starts. So the race officer may easily delay subsequent starts to change the starting line or course.

Time to start	Flags	Sound	Signal
5	Class flag displayed		Warning signal
4	P, I, Z, Black flag or I and Z displayed		Preparatory signal
1	Preparatory signal flag(s) removed		One minute signal
0	Class flag removed		Start















What's this all going to mean to those running races? First of all the sailing instructions will have to be simplified as there will be no need to mention starting sequences. However when it comes to the actual physical starting of races, race offices are going to have to do more in a shorter time. A quick look at the tables showing the difference between the old system 1 and the new system for a three class start sequence, brings this home. There are twice as many signals to be made. The race officer's job is often hectic enough; there is a lot to be done when each signal is made. Flags hoisted (or better broken out), flags lowered, sound signals made, the line watched for premature starters, etc. This is fine if you have several sets of eyes and hands but if you are human like me then it may be time for your club to consider an automatic sound signal controller like [AutoHoot](http://www.rpr.com) or roster more helpers for the race officer this season.
























An automatic sound signal controller can make things less hectic for the race officer.

Did the ISAF come up with the ultimate solution? Unfortunately not, by their own admission; they have added an asterisk by the time to the start for the warning signal and the following footnote: "or as stated in the sailing instructions". This is to allow the warning signal to be a longer interval before the start. With large yachts and/or large fleets it may be desirable to have the warning gun still at 10 minutes to avoid the congestion that could occur as yachts converge on the committee boat to check the class flag. Also as starting is in part 3 of the rule book, race committees can make their own changes, so still keep reading those sailing instructions.

Comparison between System 1 and the New 5, 4, 1, 0 system

TIME	FLAGS			SOUND	SIGNAL	NOTES
10:20					Class 1 warning signal	Display 1 st class flag
10:25					Class 1 preparatory signal, Class 2 warning signal	Display 2 nd class flag and P
10:30					Class 1 start, Class 2 preparatory signal, class 3 warning signal	Lower 1 st class flag, display 3 rd class flag
10:35					Class 2 start, Class 3 preparatory signal	Lower 2 nd class flag
10:40					Class 3 start	Lower 3 rd class flag and P






Starting 3 races using System 1

TIME	FLAGS			SOUND	SIGNAL	NOTES
10:25					Class 1 warning signal	Display 1 st class flag
10:26					Class 1 preparatory signal	Display P, I, Z, Black flag or I & Z
10:29					Class 1 one minute signal	Lower preparatory flag(s)
10:30					Class 1 start, Class 2 warning signal	Lower 1 st class flag, display 2 nd class flag
10:31					Class 2 preparatory signal	Display P, I, Z, Black flag or I & Z
10:34					Class 2 one minute	Lower preparatory flag(s)
10:35					Class 2 start, Class 3 warning signal	Lower 2 nd class flag, display 3 rd class flag
10:36					Class 3 preparatory signal	Display P, I, Z, Black flag or I & Z
10:39					Class 3 one minute	Lower preparatory flag(s)
10:40					Class 3 start	Lower 3 rd class flag

Starting 3 classes using the 5, 4, 1,0 system

Starting Penalties

Another aspect of the new rules is that a penalty flag or flags can replace the P flag used for the preparatory signal. The penalties are nothing new but it is now simpler for the race officer to invoke them and the 20% penalty no longer applies only to general recalled starts. So watch out we may see penalties being used more. The following table is to remind you of the flags and their meanings

Preparatory flag(s)		Meaning
	P	Normal preparatory signal; no starting penalties are in effect. So if you are over the line at the start you can return through the line or round the ends. Remember that you must keep clear of boats not returning.
	I	The Round-an-End Rule 30.1 will be in effect. If you are over the line during the minute before the start then you must sail to the pre-start side of the line around either end before starting.
	Z	The 20% Penalty Rule 30.2 will be in effect. If you are in the triangle formed by the ends of the line and the first mark during the minute before the start you will receive a 20% scoring penalty. (20% of the number entered or as dictated by the sailing instructions)
	Black Flag	The Black Flag Rule 30.3 will be in effect. If you are in the triangle formed by the ends of the line and the first mark during the minute before the start you will be disqualified.
	I & Z	Both the Round-an-End Rule and the 20% Penalty Rule will be in effect during the minute before the start.

General Recalls

There have been two changes to the General Recall rule. In the past a general recall could only be signalled if there were unidentified boats over the line at the start or there was an error in starting procedure. The race officer may now also have a general recall if there are unidentified boats to which starting penalties apply. The boats in question may have infringed any time in the minute before the start. The second change is that one minute after the first substitute is lowered the warning signal, not the preparatory signal for the recalled class is made.

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