High Water Race start procedure

INTRODUCTION

These are simplified rules to suit two fleets racing at the Locks Sailing Club for High Water Races.

1. **Arrive at least 3/4 hour before the start of the race. To access Mercer Bridge, you must get the Mercer Bridge Key from the clubhouse Sign-on Room. (light blue fob)**

   In the club Sign-on Room you will find signing on sheets in the filing box. The courses and the course board are on the wall outside, with non-permanent markers.

   Fill in the sign-on sheet and leave outside on a clip board for the competitors to sign on.

2. OPEN MERCER BRIDGE

Decide what direction the wind is coming from with the aid of the compass rose on the deck and choose your courses.

Write the courses on the board outside the Sign-on Room. You want a windward start if possible, an average race time of 60-100 minutes and an opportunity to shorten one or both fleets.

Both fleets start together. Usually, a large round followed by two or three smaller rounds will suffice as it ensures that they regularly pass through the line, which allows you to shorten the course. Remember, you can always shorten a race, but you cannot make it longer.

The course for the fast fleet needs to be longer than the course for the slow fleet. An extra round, a larger first round, or both, will do.

Be bold or take advice from a senior member.

Please ensure that both fleets have the same course outside of the harbour but the fast may carry out a longer one inside. This is for safety cover purposes.

The time limit for a Locks SC Race is 3 hrs.

3. On the bridge, familiarise yourself with the start line (triangle and inner distance mark) and the outer distance mark, which is not necessarily on the line. The boats must pass through the inner and outer distant marks whenever they pass through the line.

   NOTE: If windy corner is used at the start, boats need not go through the line on their way out of the lake. But at all other times when line buoy is used, as at the end of subsequent rounds, then as above all boats must pass through the line on entering or leaving the lake.

4. PREPARE THE HOOTER AND RADIO FOR USE

a) Put the foot-operated hooter adjacent to the mast, check that it works. Alternatively use the automatic start rig containing hooter and countdown timer – see instructions in Mercer Bridge.
b) Turn on Mercer Bridge mains power via the switches located under the worktop, on the right-hand side.
c) Turn on the radio via the Volume Control knob. The default channel is 16 (distress).
d) Press the plus button (+/-) on the hand held Mic to change the channel to 37 for normal conversation with the club patrol boats.
e) You should hear other traffic. An instruction card is on the worktop alongside the radio.

5. **Ensure Sidewinder or Apache, the Patrol Boats, and both crew have arrived and are preparing the boat. Check radio contact when they are ready, usually when they are on the water.**

   NO PATROL BOAT, NO RACE

6. CHECK RADIO CONTACT WITH THE PATROL BOAT

The correct communication sequence to contact the Patrol Boat (Sidewinder or Apache) is:

"[Name of Patrol Boat], this is Mercer Bridge, over"

Repeat as necessary until the Patrol Boat responds.

Communicate clearly with the Patrol Boat, followed by the word… "over" … if requiring a reply, or …. "Mercer Bridge out" …when the communication is finished.

7. PREPARE THE SIGNAL FLAGS

a. Hoist the Club burgee to the masthead.
b. Identify the flags you will need:
   - Q (Yellow- Fast Fleet),
   - B (Red- Medium Fleet),
   - P (Blue Peter- Blue & White),
   - Answering Pennant (A.P.) (Red & White).
   - 1st Substitute (Yellow & Blue Triangle),
   - X-Ray, (White with a Blue X).

(**See Page 5 for the Flag Images)**

Attach the flags you will need to their halyards in this order:

From left: Q over B (joined together), 'Blue Peter' and A.P. (answering pennant).
Extreme right: 1st Substitute and X-Ray
Have available: N (November), L (Lima), Y (Yankee) and S (Sierra).

8. As the start time approaches keep an eye on the clock. Weather permitting; place it by the mast adjacent to the hooter operator, if not, place inside, visible through the glass. Try to familiarise yourself with the fleet as they take to the water. Number of boats, sail numbers and helmsmen etc.

9. RACE START PROCEDURE

Do not be distracted by casual observers on the bridge. An informed helper is very useful.

The procedure - Nice long hoots of about 4 seconds

Hoot at - 5 minutes and Hoist flags Q & B - Warning
Hoot at - 4 minutes and Hoist flag P - Preparatory
Hoot at - 1 minute and Drop flag P - Preparatory
Hoot at Zero – race start time - **Drop Q & B – RACE IS STARTED**

Boats over the line. If you can recognise them give one hoot and hoist X-Ray. Drop when they return. If the boat does not return, leave up until they turn the 1st mark and then disqualify.

General Recall. If you cannot recognise the number of boats over the line, remain calm, blow three hoots and hoist 1st Substitute.

After the general recall, wait a few minutes for the boats to return to the start position.

You might ask the patrol boat to help; bearing in mind they have other duties.

One minute before you start the five-minute sequence again, give a long hoot and drop the 1st Substitute. You cannot recall one fleet - it must be a general recall.

Other Signals:
Postponement A.P.

1. You can postpone the start for various reasons. You can postpone one fleet; hoist A.P. over the class flag, allowing the other fleet to carry on. Normally it would be both fleets.
2. The patrol boat is not ready. You are not ready. You mess up the start sequence. Do not be afraid of a postponement, it is quite in order.
3. After a postponement, give one long hoot and drop the A.P. one minute before you start the five-minute start sequence again.

Race Abandoned. If you need to abandon the racing for whatever reason, e.g. Fog, wind too strong, no wind, no rescue boat, outside reasons, hoist N. Leave it up and stay on the bridge until you are sure everyone concerned is OK.
In most circumstances, the main responsibility is with you and the patrol boat. **USE THE RADIO**. You can abandon one fleet, leaving the other to carry on. Hoist N over the class flag.

10. AFTER THE START

Retrieve the signing on sheet and neatly fill in the form in readiness for the finish of the races. During the racing, tick off the boats as they round line buoy to start another lap. This keeps a check of their positions. If any are missing or you see anyone in trouble, call the patrol boat.

Shorten course.
If you have any reason to shorten course, e.g. race too long, weather deteriorates, Hoist flag S (Sierra). If you want to shorten one class only, hoist S with the appropriate class flag Q or B underneath, i.e. attached to each other.
On a fixed line like ours, hoist the flag on the end of the yardarm pointing in the direction the fleet are coming from. Example: - East yard if the fleet are coming

11. FINISHING THE RACE

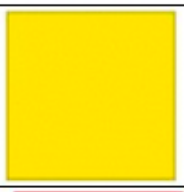
You can sit in Mercer Bridge and still comfortably use the line.
Time in all the boats that cross the finish line and enter any disqualifications (DSQ) and retirements (DNF).
If possible, use the '24-hour clock'. Do not forget to always enter the actual start time on the sheet.

12. AFTER THE RACE

- Pack away the flags and hooter.
- Turn off the radio.
- Turn off the mains electricity - switches under the worktop, on right-hand side.
- Lock Mercer Bridge - lift handle up and lock it.
- Return the Mercer Bridge key to the box in the Sign-on room.
- Take the time sheet and pin it in the bottom right hand corner of the glass cabinet in the club entrance.

See page 5 for the Flag Images

Approved By:	**Date:**
Gavin Cadmore	19 June 2024

Q	Fast Class and Start Warning	
B	Medium Class and Start Warning	
P	Preparatory	
1st Sub	General Recall	
X	Over the Line	
A. P.	Postponement	
N	Race Abandoned	
L	Come ashore, Change in Instructions	
Y	Life Jackets must be worn	
S	Shorten Course	