

IACA Committee gives the Grand Prix style finish a try (at National level)

In the recent past we have been touching on the discussion about more efficient race design at the Worlds and Continentals. The background is having increasingly long waiting times for the best sailors between races and the efficient use of the existing wind window that is due to the higher number of races. We have increased from 9 to 12 races in a series and now doubling them to 24 races for the entire event with the introduction of the split disciplines.

To increasing racing efficiency, the IACA Committee is encouraging the National A-Class Associations to test the Grand Prix Finish as one concrete measure. Based on sufficient practical experience, a decision is then to be made whether this procedure is suitable, and in which design it could be used for your future Continental and World Championships for the years 2026 onwards.

If you are unsure, the GP Finish works thus - After the first sailor in the fleet reaches the finish, also the lapped subsequent sailors after passing the bottom gate, immediately reach to the finish (without fulfilling any further laps that may be left). All sailors who have completed at least one lap will also be ranked according to their racing position, when finishing their last lap. In essence, for the over-rounded boats, it operates in a similar way to the shortened course procedures.

The consequences are clear, the races are finished faster, and with the same number of races, everyone, sailors and RC team, are on the water for less time. Waiting time for the faster sailors is reduced. The boats at the back are spared extra effort and have a better chance in the next race. Fewer boats should get scored DNF.

However, the race management must record the laps sailed for all sailors at the bottom gate (and/or at the windward mark) and take this into account when positioning the boats. This will lead to a little more effort and time to create the final result lists; but as far as we know from trials conducted so far, the clubs should not need more resources and staff on the water. We sailors will certainly also have to help correct mistakes in the preliminary lists or by raising our arm when finishing with fewer laps etc. However, we believe that this effort is limited, and the benefit should outweigh this.

The GP Finish is proven in general. Not only in car racing, but also in sailing, particularly by the Moths and the WASP Classes. Where it is applied, no one questions it fundamentally. We are now discussing it positively in the A-Class community. We believe it is time to test it on a national level to see if we can make it work for us as well. As the procedure has been in use for many years by the aforementioned classes, many clubs that we are racing in know the procedure and are used to it, so that should help.

Overall, we can see a good chance that we could complete a higher number of races with the GP Finish and enjoy less sitting around on the end of the races. We hope for a high level of acceptance from all our sailors (the good and better ones) but expect a little push back from the clubs/RC.

First commitment for the tests that we already have are from the Swiss and the German Associations (Swiss National Championship 2024 and German Open 2025). Once more, IACA Committee encourage you to join with other events and share your feedback.

GP Finish rule (draft) to supplement your Sailing Instruction

Grand Prix Finish - When the leading boat completes the course and finishes, the Race Committee signal boat at the finish will immediately display a chequered flag with sound signal. When the chequered flag is displayed, all boats that pass the gate (or the leeward mark) must go directly to the

finishing line and finish, regardless of how many laps they have completed. The chequered flag will be removed at the end of the finishing window time limit.

All boats that

a) have completed a lap before the chequered flag is displayed, but then failed to finish while it is displayed,

or

b) cross the finishing line while the chequered flag is displayed shall be deemed to have finished irrespective of the number of laps completed.

The position in the race will be based on the order, when they either completed their last lap or finished; with those, having completed more laps finishing ahead of those with fewer laps. This changes RRS 28.1 and A4.