

Jury Report
SOF Hyeres Regatta 2023
Incident involving a Support Vessel

This report is an extract of the relevant facts from a Jury Hearing at the SOF Hyeres regatta 2023. It has been redacted as the purpose of this report is to make it available for widespread distribution with the aim of avoiding similar incidents in the future.

Fact Founds:

1. A registered support vessel with one person on board was waiting after the finish of the race.
2. Two boats that had been racing approached the support vessel to prepare for being towed to shore.
3. While proceeding slowly downwind one boat was attached to the stern of the RIB.
4. A second boat then sailed alongside to windward of the rib to pick up the tow line.
5. The support person detached the 'kill-cord' from their wrist, engaged the engine in forward gear in order to keep the towline of the first boat out of the propellor and moved to the stern to attach the second boat.
6. Before completing this attachment, the boom of the second boat hit the control handle of the RIB, fully opening the throttle.
7. The support vessel accelerated abruptly causing the support person, who was wearing a personal flotation device, to fall overboard.
8. The tow line of the first boat attached snatched and broke.
9. The support person was in the water about 10 seconds before being rescued by the first boat that had been attached.
10. The support person was passed over to a another support vessel, which took her back ashore.
11. The support person was not injured.
12. The support vessel was then unmanned, travelling at high speed in the direction of another course area.
13. At 14:30 the Race Committee bridge heard the calls by VHF from a support support person:
'Emergency, Emergency, Emergency
Man Over Board recovered
Mad boat without the pilot, full speed.'
14. The area's safety vessel laid a long rope behind, and attempted to engage the propeller of the unmanned vessel, but failed. At one time during the rescue procedure, the unmanned vessel 'took off' from a wave and passed the aft of the safety vessel, crashing into the bar at the stern of the boat, with no injuries.
15. The unmanned vessel, while at high speed, nearly crashed into an anchored mark boat.
16. Finally, another safety vessel succeeded in manoeuvring alongside the unmanned vessel, close enough to push the engine control into neutral.
17. At the same time of the rescue action, the Race Committee Bridge sent the medical vessel with the doctors to area Delta. They also informed MRCC Toulon CROSSMED, the local emergency maritime service.

Conclusion:

By not using the kill cord, the support person broke Support Team Vessels regulation 3.2.

In determining the applicable penalty, the Jury referred to the World Sailing Discretionary Guidance and determined that Level 3 was the appropriate starting penalty. (Exclude the person from going afloat for one day or more.) The Jury then considered the following aggravating and mitigating factors:

AGGRIVATING FACTORS:

1. Emergency services were alerted and placed on stand-by.
2. The safety of many people afloat was put at risk.
3. There was risk of significant damage to vessels in the vicinity.

4. There will be an impact on the reputation of the event Organizing Authority with the local authorities.
5. There was damage to a race committee safety vessel.

MITIGATING FACTORS:

1. The support person immediately reported to the Organizing Authority.
2. The support person was wearing a personal flotation device and used the kill cord at most times, demonstrating a regard for safety.
3. The support person apologized and admitted they acted in breach of the rules.
4. The support person agreed that the decision of the Jury should be published in order to avoid the similar incidents in future.

The Jury concluded it was appropriate to exclude the support person from going afloat for the remaining two days of the event.

As no previous warning had been given and the competitors have not gained any racing advantage, no penalty is to be imposed on the competitors. However, the competitors were warned that any further breach of any rule at the event by the support person may result in a penalty to the them.

Rules applicable:

RRS 60.3(d), 63.3(b), STV Regulation 3.2.

Jury Policies for the application of discretionary penalties for support persons.

Decision:

1. The support person is excluded from going afloat on 28-29 Apr, except if necessary to recover the. support vessel.
2. The incident and the penalty will be reported to World Sailing – Safety Incident Reports.
3. A redacted version of the incident will be prepared for wider publication.

Parties informed of the decision (Date & time): 27 April 2023 at 21:50

Jury Members:

Panel Chairman John Doerr GBR IJ	Andrus Poksi EST IJ	Arnaud Mante FRA IJ	Romain Gautier FRA IJ	Ewa Szyfter POL NJ
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