



VO65 justification World Sailing Federation class

The retention of the unique VO65 class as a World Sailing Federation (WSF) class is pivotal for the continued vibrancy and growth of offshore sailing. This one-design class has demonstrated its merit on multiple fronts, promoting fairness, inclusivity, and global appeal within the sailing community.

Fairness

At the core of the argument for the VO65's continued inclusion is its one-design nature. The VO65's strict one-design specifications mean that all boats in the class are identical, ensuring an even playing field for competition. This levels the playing field, putting the emphasis on the skill, strategy, and teamwork of the sailors rather than disparities in equipment. The one-design principle is fundamental to the ethos of fair play, an essential value upheld by the World Sailing Federation.

Global appeal

The competitive success of the VO65 class is evidenced by its selection for prestigious events such as the Volvo Ocean Race. This class has proven itself on the world stage, attracting top-tier sailing talent and contributing to the global appeal of offshore racing. Retaining the VO65 as a WSF class cements its status as a benchmark for high-stakes, high-profile competitions, drawing attention and participation from sailors and enthusiasts worldwide.

Cost reduction

Financial considerations also come into play when justifying the VO65's status. The one-design concept significantly reduces costs for participating teams. Teams are spared the financial burden of developing and maintaining custom boats, sails, and equipment. This cost-effectiveness broadens access to competitive sailing, making it more feasible for a diverse range of teams to participate. In doing so, the VO65 class aligns with the WSF's commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that sailing remains a sport where talent, dedication, and teamwork are the primary determinants of success. The average age of these unique offshore racing boats is 10 years and it would be a waste to not use them to their full potential.

Team spirit and appeal

The global popularity of the VO65 is a key factor supporting its retention within the WSF. Its use in renowned races and events amplifies its visibility, capturing the interest of audiences worldwide. As sailing seeks to expand its reach and engage with new enthusiasts, having a class like the VO65 that resonates globally is invaluable. It serves as a powerful ambassador for the sport, drawing in new participants and fostering a sense of community on an international scale.

Talent pool and inclusivity

By maintaining the VO65 as a WSF class, the organisation signals its commitment to fostering the growth of offshore sailing. This class provides a platform for sailors to transition from regional to global competitions seamlessly. Aspiring sailors from various corners of the world can set their sights on the VO65 class as a pathway to participating in top-tier events, fostering a pipeline of talent that contributes to the sport's sustainability.

In conclusion, the VO65 class's retention as a WSF class is justified on multiple fronts. Its one-design nature upholds the principles of fair play, its competitive success on the global stage enhances the sport's prestige, its cost-effectiveness promotes inclusivity, and its global popularity contributes to the growth and visibility of offshore sailing. By embracing the VO65, the WSF reinforces its commitment to a sailing landscape that is equitable, competitive, and universally appealing.



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Compliance

The current owners of the VO65 boats, after having finished their campaigns for The Ocean Race VO65 Sprint Cup, are making new plans that vary from putting the boat up for sale, to making plans for new sailing campaigns and related business opportunities. That means that there is a kind of vacuum at this point in time on how the future will unfold for the VO65 class.

The VO65 owner class association (VO65 OCA) is actively pursuing a joint approach for the class, keeping each other informed on plans, help each other to keep the boats in one-design condition and coordinate potential joint presence at offshore regattas.

Please refer to vo65.org for more information including the bylaws of the association.

Concerning the transfer of the class rules from The Ocean Race to our association, the association will make sure that the rules are adapted in such a way that the connection to The Ocean Race is eliminated, but more important that they comply with the WSF regulations, as mentioned in the WS classes status review - working party report - Classes under review report.

Concerning this non-compliance with the minimum requirements as stipulated in WSF regulations, which we all regard as valid, the following can be taken into consideration:

- The missing annual reports would need to be provided by The Ocean Race.
 - As mentioned above the association has made an initial agreement with Andrew Yates to be involved as an International Measurer as of 2024.
 - The Technical Committee still needs to be defined and members assigned.
 - With eight boats it is difficult to fulfill Reg 10.2.1, but as the unique one-design offshore racing class it might well be worth making an exception. Currently boats are in Oceania, North-America and Europe, but boat-ownership might change over the coming 6-12 months. The goal remains to keep all boats racing together across the globe, fitting to their unique offshore capabilities.
- The ocean has no borders and whereas the boats might have a single country association, the teams on the boats are from a wide variety of nationalities. The VO65 is typically sailed with 10 sailors, meaning 8 times 10 young, diverse sailors have the chance to compete in a fair offshore event or range of events, to start their offshore careers. A true "world" sailing class.

The class intends to create an offshore race calendar, which fits the racing profile of the boats. There is currently an informal program "The Ocean Series", consisting of three Ocean Race legs, Atlantic crossing, Heineken Regatta, Caribbean 600, FastNet, Malta Middle Sea Race (please refer to vo65.org/ocean-series).

Proposal to the Equipment Committee

The VO65 OCA proposes to put the decision on maintaining the status of the VO65 class as a World Sailing Class on hold and allow the newly formed association to (i) adapt the class rules, (ii) make solid



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plans for the future in terms of event types, racing calendar and (iii) solve related organisational issues such as formally appointing an international measurer and establishing a technical committee.

The VO65 OCA commits to provide an interim report on the progress at the WSF mid-year review meeting in 2024, based on which the WSF can decide if the association can enter into a new agreement either as a class or special event organiser.

Note: while there is no agreement in place between the WSF and the VO65 OCA the VO65 OCA will not plan or execute a world championship.

Joep Winkels
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