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Working Group Members

Piotr Oleksiak (Chair)
Geoffrey Woolley (Co-Chair)
Anna Holmdahl White
Markus Schwendtner (OCSC rep)
Lisa Dormanin (Athletes Committee rep)
Mark Robinson
Guillaume Chiellino

Introduction

Sailing is an attractive and well-established Olympic sport.

We utilize two of the earth's four elements and are unique additional to the Games. As a sport we are however facing challenges, which in today's world of evaluating sport through viewership are clearly identifiable. They have been brought to us by both the International Olympic Committee and the broadcasters.

The IOC has conditioned retaining our quota and 10 event slate for LA28 on improvements in three main areas:

- More compactness
- Shorter races
- Simpler operation

The broadcasters followed with strong guidance regarding:

- A more digestible format
- Schedule reliability
- Simpler terminology
- Better insights and information flow from Race Officials
- On-screen technology

These conditions from the IOC, along with strong guidance from broadcasters are strong signals. We would not have received such strong signals if sailing was currently performing well. The reality is that sailing remains one of the lowest-performing sports in terms of viewership, and we must improve. We must now take decisive steps to reduce costs and complexity, while increasing the value sailing brings to the Olympic Games.

The role of the Working Group is to propose recommendations that enable the implementation of these conditions and guidance - without introducing unnecessary risk to the sport, while fully aligning with the stated objectives.

This report presents a first set of recommendations to be presented as proposals for Council approval. Those in **blue** have already been approved by the Events Committee, those in **green** require Events Committee approval.

Further recommendation from the Working Group will follow not later than at the 2025 Annual Conference.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are final and broken down into three areas:

- Visual presentation and terminology
- Communication of Race Management decisions and intentions
- Complexity

Visual Presentation and Terminology

Fifty percent of the Olympic Games audience do not regularly watch sport on tv. Not only do they not watch sailing—they do not watch sport. To engage them, we need to make our sport as easy to understand as possible.

The following recommendations address this:

Recommendation 1: Visual clues for male and female athletes

To help understand who is sailing on each piece of equipment, it is recommended to add visual clues on clothing or equipment to distinguish male and female athletes. This would help spectators, officials, and broadcasters easily identify participants, particularly when male and female fleets race alternatively. It would also help build support for their heroes.

Gender-specific colours, patterns, or symbols can enhance the viewer experience and simplify officiating, while respecting athletes' preferences and comfort.

The Format Working Group requests that the World Sailing Office research and implement a unified set of rules for Olympic athlete clothing and uniforms to achieve the set objectives.

Recommendation 2: Prominent national identifiers

The Working Group recommends that the World Sailing Executive Office, in collaboration with each WS Olympic Class, Manufacturers, and the Equipment Committee, ensure:

- All Olympic equipment, particularly for the Olympic Sailing Competition, shall display prominent national identifiers, including large country flags and country tri-codes at a scale larger than Paris 2024 by establishing a position and size on every sail that is optimised for broadcast and spectator engagement that is codified in the Class rules so it consistent across all regattas by December 2026.
- For the Men's and Women's Kite events, a solution for dominant country branding on kites is agreed upon and presented no later than December 2025.

This process should consider potential amendments to the following:

- The Olympic Commercial Undertaking agreement between World Sailing and the manufacturers
- Class Rules
- Advertising Code
- Equipment Manufacturing Specifications

Note this principle of this policy for the Kite events has previously been endorsed by Events Committee; this recommendation updates the timeline and responsible parties.

Recommendation 3: Development of standardised and audience-friendly terminology

The Format Working Group recommends that the Executive Office of World Sailing lead the development of a clear, consistent, and audience-friendly terminology framework and relatable data to be used across all communications and broadcasts relating to Olympic sailing.

This terminology overview should:

- Prioritise simplicity and clarity for a non-sailing, global audience;
- Align with modern broadcasting standards and viewer expectations;
- Be used consistently across all platforms (commentary, graphics, athlete interviews, official documents, etc.).

The scope of the framework should include, but not be limited to:

- Units of measurement
- Rules and racing terminology
- Stages of competition
- Event and equipment names

To ensure consistent implementation across all relevant regattas, the Format Working Group also requests that the Racing Rules Committee support the Executive Office by reviewing and proposing any necessary changes to the Racing Rules of Sailing and to standard document templates (e.g., Notice of Race, Sailing Instructions).

The objective is to support global storytelling of our sport by ensuring that sailing can be easily understood, followed, and appreciated by both sports fans and general Olympic audiences.

Communication of Race Officials Decisions and Intentions

We must make it as easy as possible for commentators to tell our story.

Communication from Race Officials to broadcasters must be smooth and real-time. Moreover, Race Officials should be part of the story. In today's world, top sports not only broadcast live audio from referees or judges but also provide live video feeds of what they see. We are not just one step behind—we are far behind.

Here are recommendations to address that:

Recommendation 4: Race officials

- i) It is recommended that the Games Race Officials be identified early in the Olympic quadrennial to ensure they have ample opportunity to gain the necessary experience at multiple class and World Sailing events leading up to the Olympic Games.
- ii) The WG recommends preparing policies and undergoing training, which encompass collaboration between Race Management, broadcasters, and other involved parties. These efforts should actively include and engage all relevant stakeholders to ensure cohesive and effective race management operations.
- iii) Additionally, the WG supports accelerating efforts to implement technology and digital officiating at all World Sailing events.

Recommendation 5: Race officials' audio visual presentation

The Format Working Group recommends that World Sailing, in collaboration with its broadcast partners and technical providers, develop a strategy to integrate Race Officials into the live audio-visual presentation of Olympic sailing events.

This approach should aim to:

- Enhance storytelling by including the voices and perspectives of Race Officials during key decision-making moments;

- Increase transparency by providing real-time insight into race management and umpire actions and judgments;
- Improve audience engagement by helping viewers understand what is happening on the race area and why;
- Provide forward-looking information by clearly communicating the Race Committee's intentions regarding scheduling, delays, next race starts or restarts—allowing commentators, broadcasters, and audiences to stay informed and follow the unfolding story in real time;
- Align with industry standards observed in other sports where referees or umpires are audibly and visually present during broadcasts.

Key elements to be considered include:

- Live audio feeds from the Race Officer or Umpire team to the broadcast;
- On-screen visuals or replays showing what officials see or communicate;
- Technical solutions enabling smooth, real-time transmission of this content;
- Clear protocols and training to ensure the professionalism and accuracy of what is shared with the audience.
- Standardised terminology and presentation to enable translations in multiple languages and pre-prepared detailed explanations in accompanying notes

This initiative is critical to bridging the gap between the on-water action and the viewer experience and will support the sport's efforts to improve its broadcasting appeal in line with IOC expectations.

Complexity

In response to the clear conditions set by the International Olympic Committee and the strong guidance received from broadcasters, it is essential that we take steps to reduce the complexity of sailing as it is presented within the Olympic Games.

The recommendations in this area aim to address compactness and schedule reliability.

Running the Olympic Sailing Competition is uniquely complex and resource-intensive when compared to traditional sailing regatta. This complexity comes with high financial and logistical costs. As a result we are faced with increasing demands to deliver a streamlined Games that remains exciting, understandable, and efficient to operate.

It is clear that sailing must evolve its approach to competition scheduling to remain viable and relevant in the Olympic context. These changes are not just about efficiency - they also support marketability and sustainability objectives outlined in the Olympic Vision.

Recommendation 6: Opening series schedule

The Working Group recommends to schedule the Opening Series races of each event in the Olympic Games over no more than three days.

Recommendation 7: Competing in a wide range of conditions

The WG recommends that all Olympic Events should be able to compete in a wide range of conditions, especially at the lower wind limit.

Recommendation 8: Starting and finishing on time

The Working Group recommends

- To adjust the World Sailing Race Management Policies for the Olympic Games by December 2026 to ensure racing starts and finishes as scheduled and fits within the competition session approved by the IOC, specifically that a race is only postponed or restarted due to significant change in wind/weather conditions during the Olympic Sailing Competition.

The implementation of this recommendation should be developed through joint efforts between the Race Officials Committee, their Race Management Sub-Committee and the Events Committee to ensure the recommendation principles are achieved (i.e. consensus on the definition of 'significant' in this context). This policy should also consider eliminating possible delays that may occur due to technical infringements and the WG requests support from the IMSC to identify such instances. This policy is anticipated to require a digital officiating solution to adjudicate the start and finish line that will have a financial impact on all stakeholders.

- The members of the Format WG are appointed to work on behalf of the Events Committee with the Race Officials Committee and Race Management Sub-Committee on implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 9: Windsurfing Marathon Race

To reduce the complexity and retain flexibility in organising World Sailing competitions and Olympic Games the WP recommends not to run the marathon race for the windsurfing (iQFOiL) at these events. The Class may run the marathon race at class events.

Next steps

The following are not recommendations, but an indication of direction of travel.

We are considering the following as they conditions imposed by the IOC:

1. **Limiting the number of final formats** to a minimum. The initial recommendation is a maximum of two.
2. **Shortening the Opening Series** by removing at least 20% of races in all events.
3. **Retaining one dedicated finals/medal day** per event.
4. **Shortening the duration of dinghy races.**

In response to the IOC's requirement to condense the Opening Series into three days, the Working Group is reviewing race durations. A key question is how to shorten races without compromising the core skillsets that define elite sailing.

Another equally important consideration is fitting races within the available broadcasting window. To be broadcasted live, races should fit within a 24–26 minutes broadcast window, including introductions, summaries and wrap up. Alternatively, a 52-minute slot could accommodate both male and female racing run back-to-back.

The recommendation to address this will be carefully examined in the coming weeks and months. It will require reflection on several aspects, including fleet sizes per race.

5. **Ensuring medal decisions are made in the final race.**

We are evaluating how to ensure that medals are not decided before the final race begins. Ideally—but not necessarily—we seek a format in which the first boat across the line becomes the Olympic champion.

Most importantly, medal opportunities are a key driver of viewership. The more nations in medal contention, the higher the audience. We understand this approach must balance fairness and simplicity and are also reviewing the weighting of the Opening Series accordingly.

There is still a lot to consider, and we are planning a series of Working Group meetings to find the right solutions.