

Manufacturer Controlled Olympic equipment – Technical Auditors

1. Introduction

- 1.1 World Sailing is responsible for ensuring the integrity of Olympic sailing equipment and safeguarding fair competition. Historically, this governance relied on measurement-controlled classes, where multiple builders produced equipment under class rules that published critical dimensions and tolerances. This openness meant International Measurers (IMs) could independently check compliance, and the class community itself could “self-police”.
- 1.2 Today’s Olympic equipment is predominantly manufacturer-controlled. Confidential build specifications are held by WS but not published or contained within class rules. While this approach has protected intellectual property and streamlined supply and the delivery of events, it has created a critical compliance gap:
 - (a) IMs do not have access to specifications needed to verify conformity. Their scope is limited to checking against class rules, which omit many of the fundamental parameters that define one-design integrity.
 - (b) WS has no direct mechanism to credibly guarantee that equipment arriving at events matches approved specifications.
 - (c) Event Equipment inspections currently depend on classes, Organising Authorities, and IMs appointed by the classes. This reliance exposes WS to risk, as some parties may resist accommodating WS requests or revealing or reporting non-compliances, leading to misalignment with WS priorities.

2. Technical auditors

- 2.1 To address this, the Executive Office is working on the following recommendations:
 - (a) To formalise the appointment of WS Technical Auditors to manufacturers and to events of Olympic Equipment selected in consultation with the Equipment Committee chair;
 - (b) To bring forward recommendations in consultation with the Equipment Committee, the Equipment Rules Sub-committee, and the International Measurers Sub-committee to ensure that WS’s governance framework provides effective control of Olympic equipment against approved building specifications;
 - (c) To establish the authority, scope, accountability, and reporting mechanisms of WS Technical Auditors, ensuring that their audit findings carry weight and are communicated consistently to the Equipment Committee, IMs, and Olympic classes.

3. Reasons

- 3.1 Recent disputes, such as claims of weight or length discrepancies in ILCAs, have highlighted the limitations of the current system, and the challenges to independently verify claims, relying on the class and its invested officers to respond to sailor concerns. This leaves WS exposed as appearing inactive or ineffective in addressing issues.
 - 3.2 WS Technical department team already conducts manufacturer audits under the Manufacturer Certification System (MCS) and provide informal technical oversight at events. The plan is to:
 - (a) enable the Equipment Committee to directly rely on the findings of these audits; and
 - (b) extend the scope of this oversight to include formal pre-event equipment inspections.
 - 3.3 Examples of framework recommendations considered:
 - (a) Regulations: Add Reg. 15.16:
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- (i) World Sailing may appoint Technical Auditors, as defined in the ERS, to conduct inspections and measurements of Olympic Equipment at production and events.
- (b) ERS: Introduce a new definition:
 - (i) Technical Auditor: A person appointed by World Sailing to carry out audits to manufacturers and conduct pre-event equipment inspections (outside of the appointed event Technical Committee's inspection plan and operation), for manufacturer-controlled Olympic Equipment.
- (c) Policy: Adopt a new Policy D12;
 - (i) defining the scope, procedures, and reporting of Technical Auditors.

3.4 Mandate:

- (a) Technical Auditors will:
 - (i) Conduct production audits of Olympic equipment against the confidential building specifications and construction manuals under the direction of the Director of Technical,
 - (ii) Extend oversight from production (already covered under the MCS) to events, supplementing pre-event inspections and reporting any non-conformities to WS and to the Event Technical Committee chair at events on areas that are not covered by class rules.
 - (iii) Report findings to the Chair of the Equipment Committee.
- (b) Scope at Events:
 - (i) At events, the Technical Auditors' role will be limited to targeted pre-event equipment inspections outside the scope of the appointed event Technical Committee's inspection plan.
 - (ii) If non-conformities are identified, auditors will consult with WS's Director of Technical & Offshore and notify the Event Technical Committee.
 - (iii) The Technical Committee, as the authority for the event under WS Rules and Regulations, may then decide not to permit non-compliant equipment. Competitors would retain the right to replace affected equipment before the start of competition.
 - (iv) The auditors' findings will be reported to the Event Technical Committee and to the Equipment Committee.
- (c) Personnel:
 - (i) Technical Auditors will be drawn initially from the current WS Technical Team, who already possess the necessary expertise, access to confidential data and who are already scheduled to perform inspections and attend key events throughout the remainder of the Olympic quad.
 - (ii) The Director of Technical in consultation with the Equipment Committee chair and the Equipment Rules Sub-committee chair will also be empowered to appoint other suitably qualified individuals as Technical Auditors to supplement staff resources.
 - (iii) Requirements for appointments may include:
 - Technical background or IM credentials,
 - Attendance at a WS IM seminar,
 - Experience conducting an audit alongside a Technical Auditor,
 - Contractual arrangements with WS.

3.5 Independence

- (a) Technical Auditors will:
 - (i) Operate under WS's mandate, reporting exclusively to the Director of Technical, who shall be guided by the Work Plan developed by the Equipment Committee.
 - (ii) Be independent of the classes being inspected and Organising Authority of the events, avoiding conflicts of interest.
- (b) IMs assess conformity against the areas defined in the class rules, which for manufacturer-controlled classes do not contain fundamental parameters that define the integrity of the equipment. Technical Auditors will provide an additional layer of oversight during pre-event inspections, supplementing the role of IMs rather than replacing them.
- (c) The Equipment Committee remains the body responsible for equipment matters receiving reports from Technical Auditors through the Executive Office.
- (d) The Director of Technical manages appointments and implementation.

4. Background

- 4.1 In recent years, WS has developed the Manufacturer Certification System (MCS) to bring order and control of production of Olympic equipment. The MCS requires builders to declare their processes, tolerances, and quality controls, which WS staff then audit at factory level. This has strengthened production governance and built constructive relationships with manufacturers.
- 4.2 However, the scope of the MCS ends once equipment leaves the factory. Currently:
 - (a) No systematic checks exist at events.
 - (b) IMs, without access to specifications, can only compare fleets or measure parameters published in class rules.
 - (c) Post-production modifications, custom-built items, or deviations from specifications may go undetected.
- 4.3 The Technical Auditors role closes this gap by extending WS's oversight from production to competition.
- 4.4 The alternative that has been considered is to recommend the introduction of fundamental parameters (such as weight, dimensions, and stiffness) into all class rules rather than keeping them within confidential building specifications. However, this option has been discarded for now, as it requires broader discussion with all stakeholders. While it may ultimately represent the only long-term solution, it is not incompatible with the recommendation to establish Technical Auditors. The Equipment Committee may in due course wish to pursue this path, particularly in the context of Olympic class re-evaluations or tenders for selection of equipment to new events towards 2032.

5. Issues

- (a) Strategy/Objective Implications
 - (i) The proposal aligns with WS's strategic priorities to:
 - Ensure fair competition,
 - Strengthen governance and technical credibility,
 - Safeguard trust in one-design Olympic equipment.
 - (b) Financial Implications
 - (i) Current quad (to 2028): Costs absorbed within the existing MCS budget, which funds T&O staff audits and inspections at a limited number of events.
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- (ii) Future quads: A phased plan will be proposed to integrate further contributions from classes and manufacturers to share costs. Details will be included in the Policy to be developed, requiring future review and approval by Board and Council.
 - (iii) Technical Auditors appointed outside the pool of WS staff would receive per diems aligned with HMRC daily rates, consistent with existing WS practice.
 - (c) Consultation
 - (i) Equipment Committee (responsible for equipment compliance decisions).
 - (ii) IMSC
 - (iii) ERSC
 - (d) Risk Register Implications
 - (i) Risk of doing nothing: Current critical gap in oversight, increasing the risk of undetected non-compliant equipment, potential cheating, and unfair competition at Olympic Class events. Impact: Major reputational damage.
 - (ii) Risk of IMs perceiving their role being undermined by the introduction of Technical Auditors. Controls:
 - clearly limiting Technical Auditors to a supplementary role specific to inspect confidential building specifications.
 - the event Technical Committee (IMs) remains the authority at events,
 - consultation with the IMSC, ERSC, and Equipment Committee.
 - (e) Legal, Governance and Compliance
 - (i) Strengthens enforcement of WS regulations and compliance with the MCS.
 - (ii) Ensures WS retains control over Olympic equipment compliance, reducing legal challenges.
 - (iii) Reporting will be to the Equipment Committee and the Board through existing QC/MCS oversight.
 - (f) Responsibility
 - Director of Technical and Offshore
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