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Working Group Members

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Additional representatives:

Dave Hughes (Athlete Committee)
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The Working Group has been supported and guided in their 21 meetings by two Vice Presidents and several senior World Sailing staff, the Events Committee Chair and Vice Chair, the majority of whom have been involved in direct discussions with the IOC and its Olympic Broadcast Service.

Introduction

This document represents the final step in a series of recommendations developed by the Working Group and already supported by Council (see Appendix 1) to define the competition format for the Olympic Sailing Competition (OSC). Taken together, these recommendations form a complete package that balances the principles of sporting credibility and consistency with the need for simplicity, clarity, and global appeal. The proposals build on extensive analysis and discussion and are intended to provide a coherent framework that can be applied across all events at the Games. By bringing the work to a conclusion in this paper, the Working Group presents a coherent concept that addresses the key format issues of our sport at the Olympic Sailing Competition (OSC). The Working Group acknowledges that many factors influencing the successful delivery of the Olympic Sailing Competition fall outside its remit. These areas – in particular storytelling, visual and broadcast presentation, and venue reliability – have already been noted in other papers.

Context

Sailing's value to the Olympic Movement has been declining for some time as evidenced by the regular reduction in athlete quota since the 2000 Olympic Games. Whilst sailing does well for universality and heritage, its media and spectator metrics are poor, and it is complex and costly to deliver. Athlete quotas for every sport will come

under renewed pressure after the LA 28 Olympic Games so action is required now to reduce the risk to sailing in the future.

This Working Group has already presented recommendations where it can within its remit, all of which have been approved by Council, to address the cost of delivery and make the competitors more visually identifiable to audiences.

With declining audience numbers and viewing hours, sailing needs to make transformational change to bring broadcasters back to the sport so audiences can see the brilliance of sailing's athletes. Broadcasters make their scheduling decisions more than a year ahead of the Games, before most athletes have qualified, and they are selecting from 50 disciplines. From the strong guidance by the broadcasters, three issues are essential:

- **Time predictability:** Sailing must start and finish on time, so broadcasters will consider showing the sport and audiences know when to watch it.
- **Greatest possible number of countries with chance for a medal:** The more competitors and the NOCs they represent, who have a realistic chance to make the finals or win a medal, the more broadcasters and audiences will engage with our sport.
- **Excitement and simplicity:** Each race must be understandable and compelling to watch so when broadcasters and audiences are deciding what to engage with, they select sailing.

Strengthening the Value of Olympic Sailing

Format is a part of a comprehensive program, and the Format Working Group acknowledges that format changes alone are not enough. With sailing and its athlete quota under so much pressure to add value to the Olympic Movement, the other priority areas that this WG believes need urgent attention to compliment the recommended format are:

- Athlete Promotion – A plan to raise the profile of sailing and its athletes between Games.
- Broadcast Presentation – Work to support the Olympic Broadcast Service and national broadcasters to present the racing in the simplest, most exciting way.
- Scheduling – Minimising recalls and race restarts to make sailing a more reliable for broadcasters.
- Competition Management – Deliver racing to the highest standards, leveraging technology effectively and selecting the right people for the right roles.

Although beyond the scope of this WG's remit, the group strongly urge the Events Committee and the other bodies of World Sailing prioritise all the aspects identified to improve the value the Olympic Sailing Competition offers the Olympic Movement.

Considerations

When discussing the following set of recommendations, the Working Group was facing a ‘magical polygon’ whose corners represent highly desirable goals that cannot be achieved simultaneously and partially are mutually incompatible or even contradictory (‘the more of A, the less of B’). Major goals in this polygon are (in no particular order in this following listing):

- Faithfulness to tradition of Olympic sailing
- Rewarding athletes’ continuous performance over a whole regatta
- Rewarding athletes’ focused performance in critical phases of a regatta
- Adherence to conditions of IOC and strong guidance by broadcasters
- Feasible for Race Officials
- Appealing to sailing audience
- Appealing to non-sport audience
- Allowing to create interesting narratives about the athletes and our sport
- Simple to understand by viewers
- Maximising the uptake of national broadcasters
- Feasibility and cost of event delivery

The Working Group developed a set of recommendations that overall acknowledges these goals through various trade-offs in order to achieve an overall configuration that the members of the Working Group – although to a different degree – see as the preferred route for the upcoming final stages of the Olympic Sailing Competition.

Recommendation 1: Number of formats

The Working Group recommends having two (2) formats for all Events.

At the Olympic Games it is essential that formats are simple, consistent, and easy to understand. The Format WG recommends implementing two distinct formats across the ten Olympic sailing events, divided between board and boat events. This structure aligns conveniently with the Los Angeles 2028 (LA28) Olympic Games, which effectively consist of two separate regattas: the board classes competing at Belmont Shore in Long Beach during the first week, and the boat classes competing from the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro during the second week.

By adopting two formats, the sport can sustain engagement around this discussion. Fans, sailors, and commentators will naturally compare the approaches as they watch. Their feedback—on what aspects enhance storytelling, viewer comprehension, and perceived fairness—will be invaluable.

Recommendation 2: Format – Windsurfing and Kite

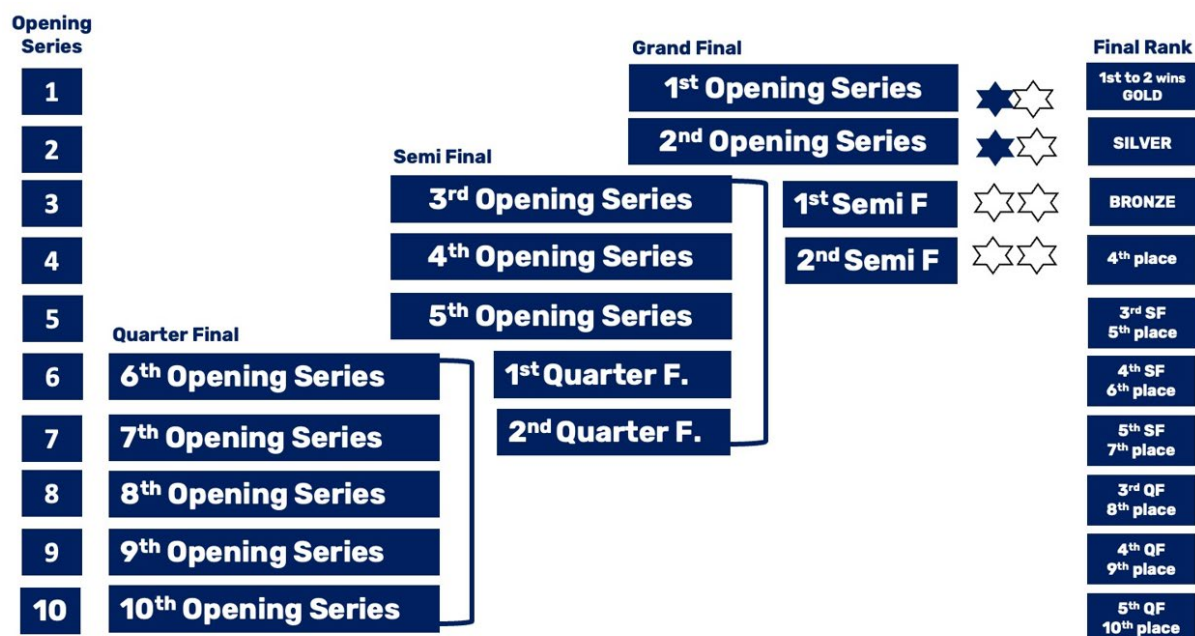
To help the sailing community clearly understand the proposed structure, the Working Group has used provisional names for the competition stages. These terms are tentative and will likely evolve into simpler and more widely understandable expressions as the format matures.

The Working Group recommends that the Olympic Sailing Competition comprises two stages:

- *Opening Series with Event-specific number of maximum races over three days*
- *Medal Series on one medal day with*
 - *Quarter Final (five competitors, one race), followed by*
 - *Semi Final (five competitors, one race), followed by*
 - *Final (4 competitors – first to two wins)*

To achieve a 52 minute broadcast window goal, the maximum number of races in the Final needs to be a maximum of three. The way to achieve this is to award a “win” to both competitors that have progressed directly to the final from the Opening Series.

This also eliminates the problem of “coming in cold” to the Final, which potentially was a big disadvantage to the competitor ranked second in the Opening Series.



The top ten competitors from the Opening Series progress to the Medal Series: Quarter Final

- *Competitors ranked 6th to 10th from the Opening Series compete in a single race.*
- *The top two ranked competitors from the Quarter Final advance to the Semi Final.*

- *The remaining competitors are eliminated and ranked 8th-10th overall according to their Quarter Final race rank.*

Semi Final

- *The Semi Final features the competitors ranked 3rd, 4th, and 5th in the Opening Series, joined by the top two of the Quarter Final.*
- *The top two ranked competitors from the Semi Final progress to the Final.*
- *The remaining competitors are eliminated and ranked 5th, 6th and 7th overall according to their Semi Final race rank.*

Advancing two competitors from the quarter and semi-finals is preferred over just one advancing, as it significantly changes the tactics and favours a “lucky gust win” which the athletes do not favour.

Final

- *The Final consists of the top two ranked competitors from the Opening Series and the top two of the Semi Final.*
- *The 1st-and 2nd placed competitors from the Opening Series begin with one race win each.*
- *The competitors progressing from the Semi-Final start with zero wins.*
- *The first competitor to achieve two race wins becomes the gold medallist, which ensures the winner of the final race always takes gold, with silver and bronze decided by the number of race wins, and then by their rank in the last race of the Final.*

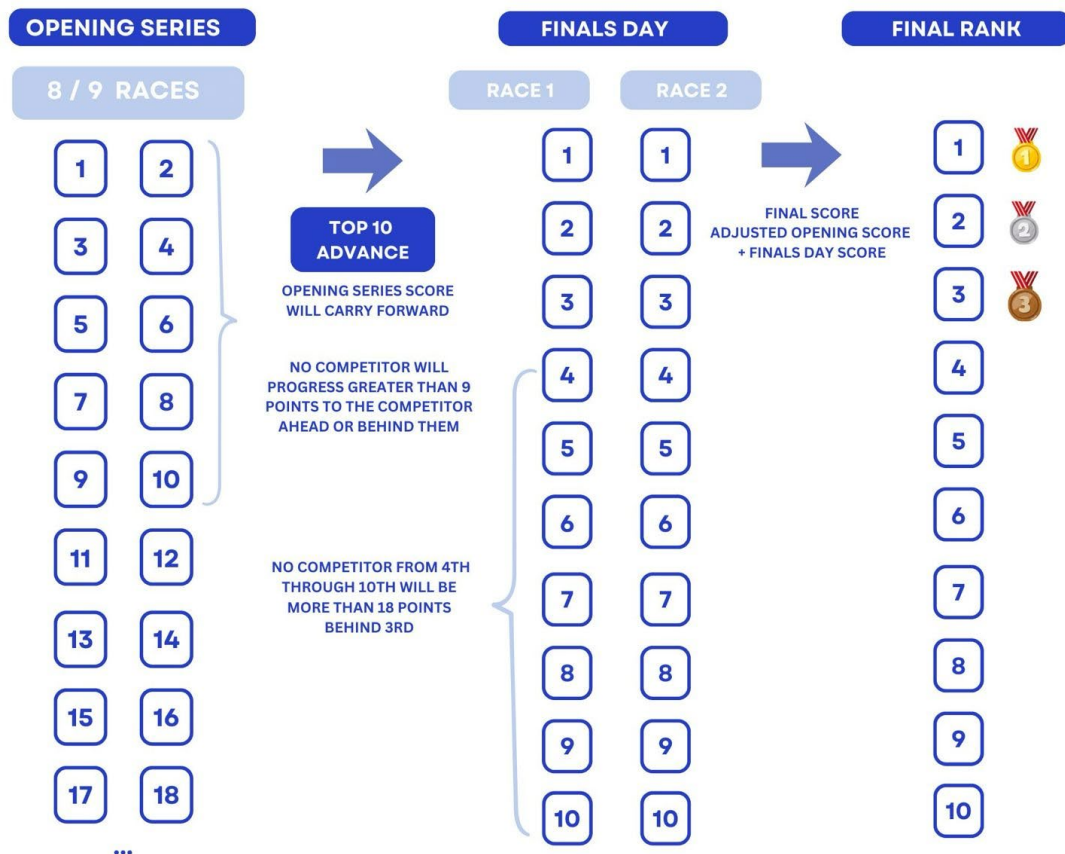
Recommendation 3: Format – Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull

Proposed Medal Series Format

The proposed format achieves a majority of the World Sailing Board format selection criteria, highlighted by:

- The Olympic Champion will be decided on the final day.
- No medal can be won before the final day.
- All competitors entering the final day will have a chance of winning a medal.
- To maximise broadcast engagement potential, ten nations are competing in both races.
- The final day is optimised for a 52-minute broadcast package.

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Structure:

- The final day will consist of two, single-point races for 10 boats.
- Nett scores from the Opening Series will carry forward into the final day.
- Scores will be adjusted to ensure no competitor will enter the final day with a gap greater than 9 points to the competitor ahead or behind them.
- No competitor ranked 4th through 10th at the end of the Opening Series, will be more than 18 points behind third.

Recommendation 4: Target Times

The Working Group recommends testing the following target times for the finals (Table 1).

Event	Final
Men's Windsurfing (iQFOiL)	4 - 6
Women's Windsurfing (iQFOiL)	4 - 6
Men's Kite (Formula Kite)	4 - 6
Women's Kite (Formula Kite)	4 - 6
Men's Dinghy (ILCA 7)	12 – 17
Women's Dinghy (ILCA 6)	12 – 17

Event	Final
Men's Skiff (49er)	12 – 17
Women's Skiff (49erFX)	12 – 17
Mixed Dinghy (470)	12 – 17
Mixed Multihull (Nacra 17)	12 – 17

Table 1: Target times for finals at the Olympic Sailing Competition (OSC)

The target times will need to meet several conditions, in particular meaningfulness and feasibility for the various events, suitability for broadcasting with special reference to broadcasting requirements such as time windows (e.g., 26/52 minute broadcast package), and equipment performance whilst avoiding the risk of a procession.

Further consideration: Course Layout Options and Grandstand Finish Zones

The Working Group references one of the previously approved recommendations that also applies to the Medal Series. It recommends that Race Officials and Olympic Classes:

- explore both upwind and reaching finishes across all course configurations;
- study the feasibility of implementing a grandstand finish zone that works across a range of wind conditions; and
- develop diagrams and layout plans for
 - stadium-style courses, with start/finish variations based on wind direction and
 - the Belmont venue area, taking into account the pier, beach access, and slalom racing options.

Recommendations 5: Testing and Reporting

The Working Group recommends that between now and the end of April 2026 as many Olympic class and multiclass regattas as possible conduct structured trials of the recommended formats. Testing should cover the complete set of recommendations made by the Format Working Group, including those previously endorsed by the Events Committee and Council, so that the full package can be validated in practice.

Within this broader programme, particular emphasis should be placed on the Medal Series structures, ensuring that these decisive stages deliver as intended in a broad range of circumstances. To achieve this, classes and regatta organisers are asked to retain the recommended format philosophy and fixed cornerstones and focus their testing on the following parameters:

- the scale and type of reward for opening series performance for the Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull events, and
- the appropriate duration of each race in the Medal Series.

The World Sailing staff to develop a testing plan in conjunction with the Events Committee's Format Working Group by 15 December 2025 and disseminate it to stakeholders for implementation.

The World Sailing staff to report to the Events Committee and the Format Working Group on a monthly basis in 2026 against the testing plan.

The Working Group further recommends, that World Sailing staff provide quarterly progress reports on the implementation of all format recommendations to ensure accountability and transparency, following the first report delivered during the 2025 Annual Conference.

The Working Group finally recommends that the Events Committee be delegated the authority to adjust the following parameters, based on the information received from testing and feedback from stakeholders, so that the final format for the Olympic Sailing Competition is determined no later than 31 May 2026.

Parameters:

- Windsurfing and Kite events: 8 or 10 competitors progress from the Opening Series to the Medal Series
- Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull events: the score adjustments defining the maximum gap between competitors shall be no greater than 9 points
- Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull events: the score adjustments defining the maximum gap between the 3rd placed competitor in the Opening Series and competitors ranked 4th to 10th in the Opening Series shall be no greater than 18 points
- All Events: the medal series race target time to the nearest minute within the band set in recommendation 4

Appendix 1: Format Recommendations already approved by Events Committee and Council

Recommendation 1: Visual clues for male and female athletes

Recommendation 2: Prominent national identifiers

Recommendation 3: Development of standardised and audience-friendly terminology

Recommendation 4: Race Officials preparation for Olympic Sailing Competition

Recommendation 5: Integration of race officials into audio-visual presentation during broadcast

Recommendation 6: Opening series scheduled over no more than three days

Recommendation 7: Competing in a wide range of conditions

Recommendation 8: Starting and finishing on time

Recommendation 9: Not running Windsurfing Marathon Race

Recommendation 10: Maximum Number of Opening Series Races and Target Durations

Recommendation 11: Variable Leg Lengths

Recommendation 12: Course Layout Options and Grandstand Finish Zones

Full text of the approved recommendations can be found on the World Sailing website [here](#)