

Events Committee Report to Council on Format of the Olympic Sailing Competition in Los Angeles 2028

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Table of Content

Executive Summary	2
1 Contextualization	3
2 Format of Olympic Sailing Competition in Los Angeles 2028	4
2.1 Context.....	4
2.2 Strengthening the Value of Olympic Sailing.....	4
2.3 Recommendations	6
2.3.1 Number of formats	6
2.3.2 Format for Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull.....	7
2.3.3 Format for Windsurfing and Kite.....	8
2.3.4 Target Times	9
2.3.5 Further consideration: Course Layout Options and Grandstand Finish Zones .	10
2.3.6 Testing, Reporting and Adjusting	10
3 Appendix 1: Format Recommendations already approved by Events Committee and Council	12
4 Appendix 2: Examples Format Medals Series for Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull	12

Executive Summary

Purpose

This report asks Council to approve the competition format structure for all ten events of the Olympic Sailing Competition at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games. The recommendations respond to declining media value and pressure to reduce athlete quotas. They are designed to appeal to broadcasters, provide predictable timing, and create competitive excitement.

Council Action Required

Council requested to approve Recommendations 1-5. These recommendations are:

- Two different formats (boards and boats)
- Medal Series structure for each format
- Target race durations
- Testing program and authority to adjust parameters through May 31, 2026

Note: The recommendations referred to in Appendix 1 (visual identifiers, scheduling, etc.) were already approved. They are included here for reference only.

Two Formats

LA28 has two separate regattas: Boards compete in Week 1 at Belmont Shore (Long Beach), Boats compete in Week 2 at Port of Los Angeles (San Pedro). Each format has the same basic structure: Opening Series (3 days, with a different number of races for each event) followed by Medal Series (1 medal day, top 10 competitors).

Element	Boats (Dinghies, Skiffs, Multihull)	Boards (Windsurf/Kite)
Equipment	ILCA 7, ILCA 6, 49er, 49erFX, 470, Nacra 17	Formula Kite, iQFOiL
Medal Series Format	Two single-point races	Knockout: Quarter Final → Semi Final → Final
Opening Series Advantage	Points carry forward with compression (max 9-point gaps; max 18 points from 3rd to 10th)	1st & 2nd progress to the Final with one win each in a 'first-to-two-wins' series
Target Race Duration	12-17 minutes	4-6 minutes

Strategic Context

The value of sailing to the Olympic Movement has been declining over several Olympic cycles. This is shown by the regular reduction in athlete quotas. While sailing scores well on universality and heritage, its media and spectator numbers are poor. Sailing is also complex and costly to deliver. Athlete quotas for every sport will face renewed pressure after LA28. We must take action now to reduce the risk for sailing in the future.

Based on strong guidance from broadcasters, these format changes address three essential requirements:

- **Time predictability:** Sailing must start and finish on schedule
- **Maximum medal contenders:** More countries engaged = higher viewership
- **Excitement and simplicity:** Compelling, understandable racing

1 Contextualization¹

The Events Committee's Format Working Group has been supported and guided in their 20+ 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, its Olympic Broadcast Service, and Olympic media rights holders. Despite being extensively discussed within the experts in the Events Committee and representatives from athletes and coaches/team leaders, their original format proposal caused concerns and irritation by some segments of the broader athlete basis and required modification.

The current proposal reflects these concerns. It is based on the previous work of the Format Working Group and on extensive consultations during the World Sailing Annual Conference 2025 in Dun Laoghaire. It has the support of the Events Committee expressed in unanimous vote on this matter during its official meeting, the Athletes Committee representatives who fed the views of the concerned parts of the broader athletes community into the consultations, the Team Leader and Coaches Commission who fed the views of MNA high performance and Olympic programs into the consultations, and the Olympic Classes.

I gratefully acknowledge the willingness of Council to have given us additional time to develop this report and its recommendations.

¹ These remarks constitute the view of the Events Committee Chair and are not necessarily shared by other members of the Events Committee.

2 Format of Olympic Sailing Competition in Los Angeles 2028

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 report, the Events Committee presents a coherent concept that addresses the key format issues of our sport at the Olympic Sailing Competition (OSC).

The Events Committee 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 reports, particularly the Olympic Vision Project.

2.1 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 for sailing in the future.

The Events Committee has presented recommendations already 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.

2.2 Strengthening the Value of Olympic Sailing

Format is a part of a comprehensive program, and the Events Committee 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 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.

The Events Committee strongly urges other bodies of World Sailing to prioritise all the aspects identified to improve the value the Olympic Sailing Competition offers the Olympic Movement.

2.3 Recommendations

The following set of recommendations is placed within 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 set of recommendations overall acknowledges these goals through various trade-offs in order to achieve an overall configuration that the Events Committee – although to a differing degree – see as the preferred route for the upcoming final stages of the Olympic Sailing Competition.

2.3.1 Number of formats

Recommendation 1: Number of Formats

The Working Group recommends having two (2) formats for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Sailing Competition.

At the Olympic Games it is essential that formats are simple, consistent, and easy to understand. The Events Committee recommends implementing two distinct formats across the ten Olympic sailing events, divided between the board and boat events. This structure aligns with the Los Angeles 2028 (LA28) Olympic Games that effectively consist of two distinct 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.

2.3.2 Format for Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull

Recommendation 2: Medal Series for Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull with two races

The Events Committee recommends that the Olympic Sailing Competition for Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull Events comprises the following:

Competition Structure:

- Opening Series with Event-specific number of maximum races over three days²
- Medal Series on one medal day with the top 10 competitors from the Opening Series competing in two single-point races

Score Adjustment for Medal Series: Opening Series net scores carry forward into Medal Series and are compressed to keep competition close:

- Maximum 9 point gap between competitors
- Maximum 18-point gap between 3rd place and everyone ranked 4th -10th

Figure 1 gives an overview about the proposed format.

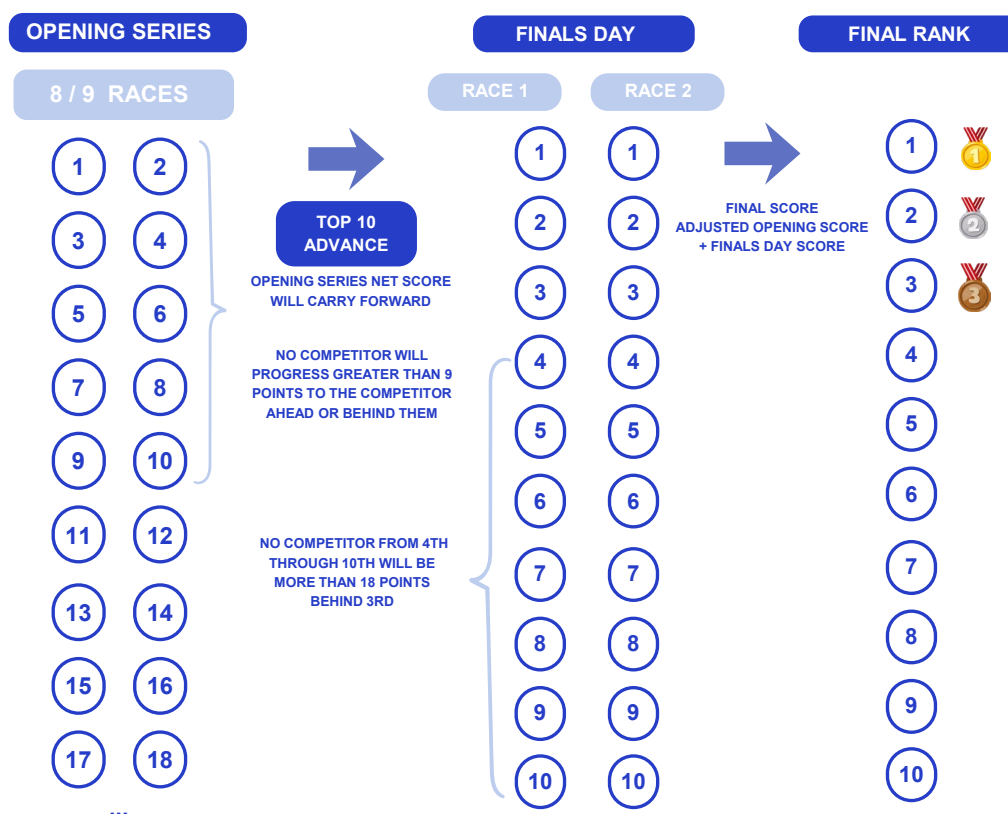


Figure 1: Format for Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull at the Olympic Sailing Competition in Los Angeles 2028

² Already approved by Council; here repeated to provide the overall picture

Appendix 2 provides several examples illustrating the impact of point compression following the Opening Series.

This format achieves a majority of the World Sailing Board format selection criteria:

- 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.
- Ten nations are competing in both races to maximise broadcast engagement potential.
- The Medal Series day is optimised for a 52-minute broadcast package per event.

2.3.3 Format for Windsurfing and Kite

Recommendation 3: Medal Series for Windsurfing and Kite with Quarter Final, Semi Final and Final

The Events Committee recommends that the Olympic Sailing Competition for Windsurfing and Kite comprises the following:

- Opening Series with Event-specific number of maximum races over three days³
- Medal Series on one medal day with
 - + Quarter Final (five competitors, one race, top two progress), followed by
 - + Semi Final (five competitors, one race, top two progress), followed by
 - + Final (4 competitors, first to two wins, 1st and 2nd of Opening Series commence with one win each)

Figure 2 gives an overview about the proposed format.



Figure 2: Format for Windsurfing and Kite at the Olympic Sailing Competition in Los Angeles 2028

³ Already approved by Council; here repeated to provide the overall picture

The top ten competitors from the Opening Series progress to the Medal Series consisting of Quarter Final, Semi Final and Final.

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, 9th and 10th overall according to their Quarter Final race rank.

Semi Final

- Competitors ranked 3rd, 4th and 5th in the Opening Series and the top two of the Quarter Final compete in a single race.
- The top two ranked competitors from the Semi Final advance 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 the latter significantly changes the tactics and favours a “lucky gust win” that 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. This ensures that 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.

To achieve the goal of a 52 minute broadcast package, the maximum number of races in the Final needs to be three. The way to achieve this is to award one race-win to the 1st- and 2nd-placed competitors from the Opening Series. This also eliminates the problem of ‘coming in cold’ to the Final without some ‘point protection’, which potentially was a big disadvantage to the competitor ranked second in the Opening Series in the format frequently used by Boards in the past year.

2.3.4 Target Times

Recommendation 4: Target times

The Events Committee recommends testing the target times for the finals as indicated in Table 1.

Event	Race target times Medal Series
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
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 Medal Series races at the Olympic Sailing Competition in Los Angeles 2028

The exact 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.

2.3.5 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.

2.3.6 Testing, Reporting and Adjusting

Recommendation 5a: Testing and test plan

The Events Committee 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. For this, the World Sailing staff shall 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.

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:

All Events: the medal series race target time to the nearest minute within the band set in Recommendation 4

Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull events

- the scale and type of reward for opening series performance
- Boundary condition: the score adjustments defining the maximum gap between
 - + competitors shall be no greater than 9 points and
 - + 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

Windsurfing and Kite events: 8 or 10 competitors progress from the Opening Series to the Medal Series

Recommendation 5b: Reporting

The Events Committee recommends that in 2026 the World Sailing staff report monthly to the Events Committee and the Format Working Group against the testing plan. It further recommends that World Sailing staff provide quarterly progress reports on the implementation of all format recommendations to ensure accountability and transparency.

Recommendation 5c: Parameter adjustment

The Events Committee recommends that it be delegated the authority to adjust the parameters outlined in Recommendation 5a 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. These parameters are:

All Events – the medal series race target time to the nearest minute within the band set in Recommendation 4

Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull events

- the scale and type of reward for opening series performance
- Boundary condition: the score adjustments defining the maximum gap between
 - + competitors shall be no greater than 9 points and
 - + 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

Windsurfing and Kite events – 8 or 10 competitors progress from the Opening Series to the Medal Series

3 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](#)

4 Appendix 2: Examples Format Medals Series for Dinghy, Skiff and Multihull⁴

Example 1

	Points after Opening Series		Points begin of Medal Series	
	total	total with discard		
1st	51	35	35	Heuristic 1 at work: No competitor has a gap greater than 9 points (can be fewer) to the competitor immediately ahead/behind
2nd	67	46	44	
3rd	68	50	48	
4th	74	56	54	
5th	75	58	56	
6th	79	61	59	
7th	82	63	61	
8th	84	65	63	
9th	84	66	64	
10th	87	68	66	

⁴ Thanks to John Gibson and Ben Remocker for providing raw data from past Olympic Sailing Competition.

Example 2

	Points after Opening Series		Points begin of Medal Series	
	total	total with discard		
1st	20	14	14	Heuristic 1 at work: No competitor has a gap greater than 9 points (can be fewer) to the competitor immediately ahead/behind
2nd	38	28	23	
3rd	37	28	23	
4th	47	38	32	
5th	69	49	41	Heuristic 2 at work: No competitor more than 18 points (can be fewer) behind 3rd ranked competitor of Opening Series
6th	67	49	41	
7th	72	52	41	
8th	63	52	41	
9th	91	74	41	
10th	88	74	41	
11th	102	84	41	
12th	107	91	41	

Example 3

	Points after Opening Series		Points begin of Medal Series	
	total	total with discard		
1st	50	34	34	Heuristic 2 at work: No competitor more than 18 points (can be fewer) behind 3rd ranked competitor of Opening Series
2nd	49	34	34	
3rd	46	34	34	
4th	53	39	39	
5th	59	45	45	
6th	73	53	52	
7th	73	59	52	
8th	85	67	52	
9th	86	69	52	
10th	95	75	52	