

NORTH SAILS COWES WEEK 2026

NOTICE TO COMPETITORS

NUMBER 3

J/70, RS21 & SB20 COWES WEEK SHORT SERIES 2026

Race Management Information for Competitors for WW/LW Races

These notes do not form part of the Sailing Instructions and are advisory only. They are an indication of how the Race Management Team plans to operate and the guidelines it plans to follow. They will not be accepted as evidence in a protest hearing. Any queries should be discussed with the Race Officer and/or the Chair of the Protest Committee.

1 Aim.

The aim of the Race Management Team is to run challenging, fair racing as safely as possible. Safety will always take priority.

2 Feedback.

I am always available after racing and am very happy to discuss why I made the decisions I did. If you have any queries or suggestions, please speak to me.

3 Toilet Facilities afloat

There is a toilet on both the start and finish boats. You are welcome to use them but racing will not be delayed. Please contact the Race Committee on **VHF 77** or orally if you have a query.

4 Postponements Ashore.

If you are held ashore watch the app and listen on **VHF 03**.

5 Committee Boat Start Line.

Our plan is to use the Signal Boat (SB) for the Starboard end of the line and a buoy as the Port end as it is easy to move with wind changes and between the starts. The Start Signal Boat is a Nimbus Motorboat with a blue hull and white topsides. I may use a shorter line for the SB20s and RS21s but it will increase the gap between starts. We will see how it works. I may change to a pin boat if we have a lot of General Recalls but that is very unlikely. You will be informed of the Start Line on **VHF Channel 04** after the Orange Flag has been displayed.

6 Starting

I plan to use Vakaros as long as all boats are visible to me on the iPad. I will still display Orange, Warning Signal, prep up and down and Warning down with sound signals as per RRS 26 but not display Flag 'X' if there are boats OCS.

If there are boats not visible to me on Vakaros I will display Code Flag 'T' with a long sound signal before the Warning Signal and display Flag X with a sound signal if there are boats OCS. I will give out the sail number of boats OCS on VHF as soon as possible after the start but this may include boats that Vakaros says have already returned. I will accept the decision of Vakaros for boats called OCS and then clearing themselves.

If Vakaros fails I plan to start by using Flag U for the first start. If there is serious bunching at one end, I plan to postpone the start by displaying Flag AP with two sounds and re-lay the line. If competitors are evenly spread down the line, I plan to let the start run and try to identify premature starters. If there are unidentified premature starters who in my opinion have gained a significant advantage, I plan to signal a General Recall. The recalled start will be Blackflagged.

If there is an unexpected major wind shift during the start sequence, I will probably postpone the start by displaying Flag AP with 2 sounds. If the race has started and the wind doesn't go back very soon after the start, I will probably abandon the race by displaying flag N. If there is a General Recall, Flag First Substitute will be displayed and it should be announced on the Radio using the words "General Recall" and repeated several times. If there are individual recalls this should be announced immediately on the radio using the words "X-ray, X-Ray Displayed", as well as displaying Flag X and making a second sound signal.

NORTH SAILS COWES WEEK 2026

NOTICE TO COMPETITORS NUMBER 3 (CONTINUED)

7 Calling the Start Line

The Deputy Race Officer (DRO) and I both call the line from the Committee Boat end and the Assistant Race Officer (ARO) calls it from the ODM spotter boat. The DRO and ARO concentrate on the numbers of the boats. I watch the fleet and decide on Postponements and General Recalls. We all run tapes and have recorders to write down numbers from 90 seconds before the start. We record the numbers of the boats nearest to the line and those either side of them with details of identifiable features such as hull colour, sponsors logos and clothing. We have an open telephone link to the ARO from 90 seconds. Decisions about OCS are by consensus. We often use a camera to help identify numbers.

8 Delay Between J/70 and SB20 Starts

I have been told your target race time is 50-55 minutes. This means that the first boat should round Mark 1 fifteen-seventeen minutes after the start and reach the gate 10-12 minutes later. I plan to lay a different pin end buoy for the SB20s and RS21s and display the Warning Signal for the second class to start roughly 3-5 minutes after the J/70s start. The Warning Signal for the last class to start will be soon after the start of the previous fleet as long as a previous class is not going to be approaching the gate at the start.

9 Courses

If I have a separate finish boat I plan to use course LAS2 as this allows me to start the next race for a class as soon as they have all finished. The Finish Line will be to the left of the start line as you come downwind and is between a White Nimbus Motorboat and a buoy. Both should have orange flashing lights on them to help you recognise them. If I haven't got a separate Finish boat I will use LA2 for the J/70s and LAR2 for the other classes for the second race, with a reaching finish between a Mark Boat and a buoy. All classes will sail LA2 for the final race of the day.

If we only have a narrow band of wind to race in, I may have to use a three lap course, but I don't want to.

I will make the first windward leg as long as I can to spread out the fleet whilst trying to maintain choice. The gate will usually be 0.15-0.25nm above the start line. If it looks as if the target time is going to be greatly exceeded I will Charlie at the Gate with a shorter second beat. See Para 20.

10 Gap between Races

I will broadcast the proposed time of the start for the next race on **VHF Channel 04** as soon as all boats have finished or the 20 minute finishing window has closed. If any boat needs extra time let me know on **VHF Ch 77** or by telling one of the Race Committee boats.

11 Time.

I will use Internet time and always start the sequence on a five minute so that you can set your timer from your phone/watch once I have gone into sequence if your Vakaros is not working. However, if there is an AP or General Recall I may restart on an odd minute. GPS time can vary by a second or two.

12 Abandoning.

If there is a major wind shift that causes significant changes in the order before any boats have gone round Mark 1 my intention is to abandon, even if there is a clear leader. Once at least 5 boats have gone round Mark 1, I will do everything I can to save the race by moving marks. However, if the wind dies then comes back from an unexpected direction changing the order I am likely to abandon the race.

13 Race Committee Protests.

It is my intention to protest competitors as little as possible. Other than under RRS 2 or serious damage, even if I see an infringement of a Rule, I will not protest if there is a competitor who witnessed the infringement. However I am always prepared to witness for a competitor if I saw the incident.

14 Shorten Course.

If it looks as if it will take more than 45 minutes for the first boat to reach Mark 1 for the second time, I may display Flag S from an Official Boat and finish the fleet at Mark 1 or 1A. It is unlikely that I will shorten at any other mark but is possible so watch the signals.

NORTH SAILS COWES WEEK 2026

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15 Light Winds.

As long as there is wind over the complete racecourse in which boats can make progress and properly control their actions it is my intention to run racing as this is what is done in the rest of the world. If the wind is or becomes very shift or gusty, racing may be postponed or abandoned.

16 Heavy Winds.

If the conditions deteriorate to the extent that safety is a serious concern, I am likely to shorten the race rather than abandon it and may send the boats ashore using AP over H or AP over A. This is because abandoning produces a "starburst effect", which makes effective marshalling impossible. Occasionally it may be necessary to abandon racing if shortening is impossible or boats are more likely to be damaged if they continue racing.

17 Finishing

The DRO and ARO each call the numbers of boats as they finish into a tape recorder with a recorder to write down the numbers. Usually we have a third caller and recorder who are doing the same but concentrating on the numbers rather than the order. We usually video the finishes. We will make a sound signal for the first finisher that is not OCS, UFD or BFD and the 20 minute time limit for finishing runs from this sound signal. We do not now routinely whistle all finishers as this makes the tapes inaudible. However it is very easy to miss boats who are overlapped so if you don't agree with your finishing position fill in a results query form and I will check the tapes and video.

18 OCS and DSQed Boats

It is our intention to broadcast the sail numbers of boats OCS on a Papa start between 30 seconds and 1 minute after the start if we are not using Vakaros. The sail numbers of boats U Flagged and Black Flag DSQ should be broadcast between 1 and 2 minutes after the start. Boats do not need to stop racing but if you continue and lose the redress hearing you may be protested under RRS 2. I will also put the sail numbers of any OCS, UFD & BFD boats on a board on the side or back of the Committee Boat by the end of the Race so you all know before the next race.

19 Sailing Area

We plan to repeatedly announce the Starting Area for that day on the **VHF channel 04** soon after you finish your first race. If for some reason we decide to change starting area it will be announced on VHF and the Committee Vessel will display Flag L when it moves from one area to another.

20 Changing the Course after the Start

If the wind has changed such that the windward mark for the second beat needs to be moved to stop the race being a procession I will almost certainly lay a replacement mark as there will always be a fleet on the old windward leg. We will display IC Flag or board "C" at the gate with multiple sound signals, also displaying Red or Green flags or boards and '+' or '-' as described in RRS 33. We will also make repeated announcements on VHF Channel 04. The replacement Mark 1 may not be in position at the time the signal is displayed. There will be no replacement Mark 1A. We will lay the replacement mark and remove the old ones as soon as possible.

21 Upper Wind Limit

I do not intend to start a race if the mean wind speed is above 24 knots or if there are gusts of over 28 knots lasting more than 30 seconds. I may also send boats ashore if in my opinion the sea state or visibility becomes unsafe for racing, or I have been warned that a strong wind front is approaching. If the wind builds suddenly to unsafe levels during a race, I will do my best to finish the race either at the finishing line or by shortening at the next mark and send the boats ashore. This will be announced on VHF.

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