

IRC France in 2019



Antibes, October 2019

1. Overall Market appraisal

a. Races

2019 has confirmed last year's trend, namely a Mediterranean dynamics versus Atlantic as well as shorthanded racing.

The Fastnet is now established as a major international race involving both professional and amateur racers attracting even boats from the Med.

The IRC European which was organized this year at San Remo showed a very good performance level although a bit deceptive regarding the number of entrants if we consider that it was placed right after the Giraglia.

b. Clubs

Clubs continue to struggle with too numerous short classes (Crew, solo, duo, IRC groups, Osiris groups) requiring always more staff on the water while volunteers numbers reduce. They see a regular aging of racers and try to find solutions to attract youngsters. The fact is that dinghy sailing, which should be the entry gate to offshore racing, declines, challenged by new and more attractive practices (foiled windsurfers, kite surfing) which are fun and fast, requiring less logistics and less competition.

c. Boats

This year the number of IRC certificates has slightly increased which is a very welcomed sign!

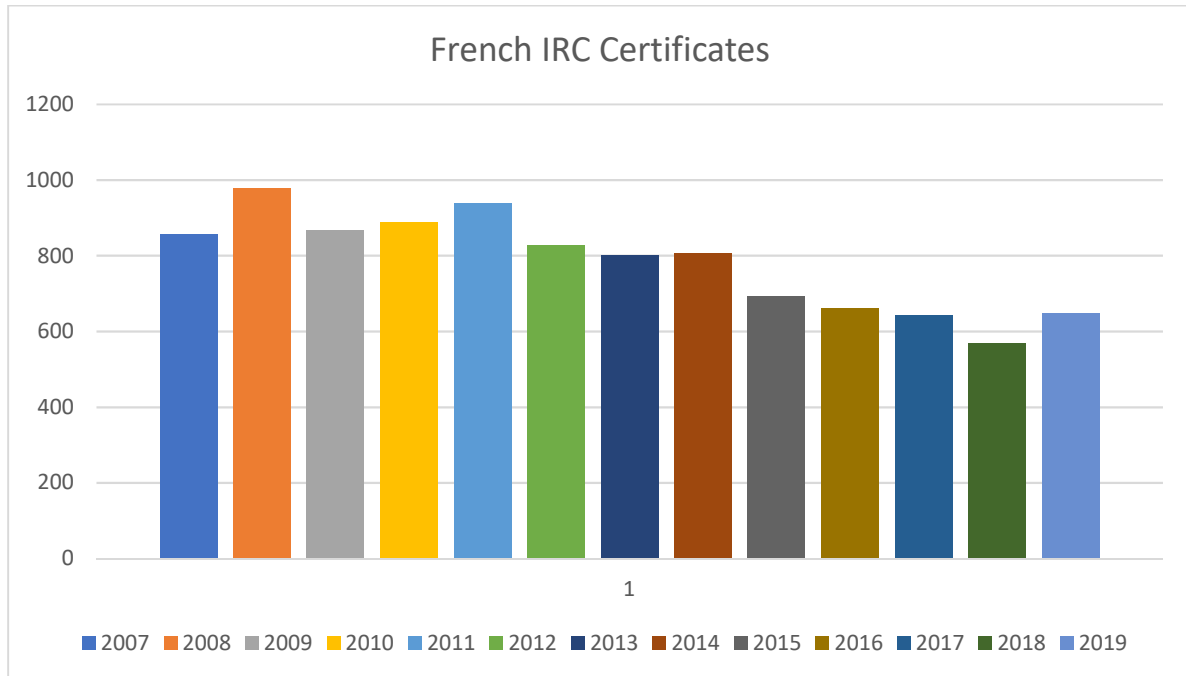
A number of new 30 to 40' boats have been launched this year: Sunfast 3300, J99, JPK 10.30, JPK 11.80. Most of them have deck plans compatible with crew and shorthanded sailing with ballasts options. They are clearly designed for offshore racing as many sailors unlike in the previous decade privilege this format rather than inshores. In Fact races round the cans are more technical, tactical and physical, thus favouring top and semi pro crews.

This highlights the fact that we have not solved the issue of keeping IRC as a rule for cruiser-racers and it might become a Grand Prix Rule if we do not do something about it.

Regarding the performances of these boats, when the weather is favourable, they are true sledges and leave behind the non-planning competitive boats (J133, Grand Soleil 43...).

IMA owners and boat captains have been satisfied by the increased presence of Ludovic in cooperation with James Dadd on their races, backed by a tighter relationship between IMA and UNCL presidents.

2. France IRC Certificates issued



For the first time in several years, the number of certificates has grown by 14% without Single handed and 18% all together representing 104 additional certificates.

France therefore has increased its share on UNCL overall year to year from 37 to 39 %.

N.B: These are the figures by end of August and must be considered carefully as the season is ongoing and the dates of some races might have moved.

3. IRC UNCL organisation

UNCL service has continued to improve in 2019, even with highly demanding customers such as those of the IMA fleet. Ludovic ABOLLIVIER, General Manager of UNCL IRC Centre de Calcul with the efficient support of Basile DESPRES have worked hard to achieve these results and should be granted for this.

4. Efficient communication

UNCL has made significant efforts and investments, coordinated with PropIRC ones.

Priority has been given to the IRC Europeans as it was a way to improve position in Italy where ORC Club is a serious competitor.

2019 has seen the launch of a UNCL newsletter of A3 format, very convenient and appreciated by clubs which forward it to their members.

Traffic on Facebook pages and visits on website have grown again.

5. Strategic analysis

These good results demonstrate the strength of IRC in France, despite Osiris competition. This should not be considered yet as a true change towards IRC and everything should be done by RORC and UNCL in 3 main areas:

- Keep pace with competition regarding rule changes: Variable crew numbers, ballasts and flying jibs should be reconsidered to maintain fairness of competition. Flying jibs in particular since they are now considered both by ORC and ORR and not by IRC yet. Many sailors ask for this since they are very convenient for racers and cruisers (furling sails) an increase performance in the range of 40 to 90°, prior to being able to carry a kite. IMA would like to see the actual measure between spi and jib to go down from 75 % to as low as 60 %.
- Simplicity: the rule should be accessible through a simple free App on mobile phone
- Cost: Keeping cost down is mandatory and a great way to challenge competition
- Fleet: A way has to be found to bring back cruiser-racers in IRC races

6. Proposal for next year

Although we agree that IRC must remain as one single rule, it must be easier to use by clubs and Corinthian owners willing to compete but so far feeling that there is no room for them under the current IRC.

As per 2018 PropIRC's request, UNCL Rating office has developed a solution called **IRC Go!™**. This solution is the outcome of a seminar involving clubs and owners last year in Marseilles.

This solution is to be used by clubs and not by owners which does not compete with an IRC certificate. PropIRC is confident that the solution is efficient and is ready to use it, along with other countries such as Belgium or Italy, eventually in new races to avoid reactions from Osiris.

Design evolution (same as 2018)

Considering the design evolution of the most competitive boats, the critical factor is the change on composition of the apparent wind of some new fast boats in which the proportion of speed versus true wind is far much bigger than before, impacting strongly on foresails shapes and sizes. Alike in multihulls, there is less and less downwind tacks, sheets being tucked much more to suit with smaller angles. These changes are linked with hull designs as well as appearance of foils and ballasts mainly. IRC must be fun and fair. Speed is attractive to younger generations and IRC must consider this trend, but not at expense of fairness of the rule,

7. Conclusion

PropIRC is confident that IRC, although still the best rule available, has room to improve, by reinforcing its creativity and reactivity – not at expense of its reliability and cost - in times when digital make change happen much faster than ever before, requiring to change our pace.

These comments were the same last year and if a lot has been done in 2019, concerns have not disappeared and it is expected that both RORC and UNCL will continue to tackle these issues to be able to outperform competition.

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