

# Seahorse

## International Sailing

Game 542 £7 US\$9.99

**Click  
Here**

**Get the May edition FREE**  
not available in your IRC membership

**Coming of age – Rod Davis**  
**Pioneers – Almeric Paget & George Martin**  
**More in the tank – Yoann Richomme**  
**Game changing – Doug Peterson**  
**On thick ice – Jablonski & Struble**  
**My friend Bill Monti – John Bertrand**



**(Still) the  
best ever  
– Ian Williams**

APRIL 2025  
The official  
magazine of the  
Royal Ocean  
Racing Club



INTERNATIONAL RATING  
**IRC**





## IRC Rating Authority ircrating.org

The IRC Rule is owned and managed by RORC and YCF and certificates are issued by:

### RORC Rating Office

Lymington, UK  
info@rorcrating.com  
rorcrating.com  
Director:  
Jason Smithwick  
Jenny Howells  
Emma Smith  
Sally Moss

### L'UNCL, Pôle Course du YCF

Paris, France  
irc@ycfrance.fr  
ycf-club.fr/irc/  
Director:  
Ludovic Abollivier  
Basile Despres

In countries outside the UK and France, IRC administration is through the local Rule Authorities around the world.

Please see [ircrating.org](https://ircrating.org) for contact details.

# Stability Information and OSR Plan Review

As the IRC Rating Authority, we take safety information on the IRC certificate seriously and must ensure that any stability data (STIX/AVS) or World Sailing Offshore Special Regulation (OSR) Plan Review reference published on an IRC certificate is supported by documentary evidence. If you are entering the 2025 Rolex Fastnet Race or other offshore events, please bear the following in mind:

If a boat undergoes a major modification – such as changes to the keel, hull, internal ballast, or variable/moveable ballast – the STIX and AVS data become invalid and will be removed from the IRC certificate until we receive recalculated stability data. This also applies to the OSR Plan Review certificate number.

For less significant modifications, such as new or altered rudders, rigs, or interior fitout, the impact on STIX/AVS values or OSR Plan Review approval is not always clear-cut. In these cases, we will contact owners to confirm whether the modification affects stability values or OSR plan review compliance. You may:

- Provide a statement confirming the modification does not impact STIX,

AVS, or OSR Plan Review approval and request these remain on the IRC certificate for OSR screening at events.

- Submit recalculated STIX/AVS documentation or a new OSR Plan Review certificate.
- Advise that you do not require these data on your IRC certificate.

We recommend considering these requirements when modifying your boat to avoid last-minute concerns about OSR compliance.

For further details, refer to the relevant World Sailing OSR rules: **STIX and AVS:** OSR 3.04, **Plan Review:** OSR 3.03



ROR/RICK TOMLINSON

## Seahorse archive articles online

Did you miss an IRC article in Seahorse Magazine? You can access past issues online through the digital platform. LINK: <https://www.seahorse.co.uk/digital/irc/> We are now also publishing selected archive

articles on the IRC website - find them in the News section on [ircrating.org](https://ircrating.org) LINK: <https://ircrating.org/irc-news-articles/articles/>

## IRC 2025: Stay Ahead for the New Season

As of now, the IRC Rating Authority (RORC Rating Office and UNCL, Pôle Course du YCF) has issued certificates to nearly 1,000 boats in the northern hemisphere for the new season, with many more applications coming in; while around 570 boats in the southern hemisphere continue to enjoy exciting racing under IRC 2024 until the end of May.

For those racing in Australasia, Southeast Asia, India, and other regions with June-May

certificate validity, revalidation time is approaching! The good news? As highlighted in the February 2025 issue of Seahorse, changes for 2025 are minimal. Revalidation details will be sent to Rule Authorities in April, so keep an eye out for updates.

Get ahead of the game—review all IRC 2025 information in advance on the IRC website <https://ircrating.org/irc-rule/>

# One or many

So, for the IRC column, this month I would like to consider one-design and development class racing. This may seem a little off topic, but bear with me. One-design racing is highly competitive with all boats built to strict class rules. A well-maintained one-design class fosters tight, tactical racing. One-designs like the J/70, Melges 24, Etchells and Dragon have all been successfully delivering competitive racing over many years, while newer classes like the ClubSwan 36 and Cape 31 quickly gained popularity by offering high performance with controlled development.

The first step away from one-design racing is what I call single-class racing, with a degree of flexibility in design but within a defined rule framework that aims to keep competition fair and prevent an all-out development war. Such classes often employ a box rule, with constraints on key parameters such as length, displacement, sail area, draft and sometimes materials. Notable examples include the TP52 class, which has remained highly competitive despite allowing design evolution, and the Metre yachts which have been refined over decades while still maintaining historical continuity.

Now many would have you believe that one-design and class racing primarily highlights skill, tactics and fine-tuning of equipment within the constraints of the class rules. But this strict framework paradoxically leads to continuous improvements in sailboat performance as sailors and teams seek every allowable advantage.

While class racing encourages innovation and can lead to faster boats, it also tends to favour teams with bigger budgets that can afford the latest technology and improvements. This is a key distinction from one-design racing, where spending power is often – but not always – less of a factor. So class racing often sees an ongoing cycle of optimisation and rule tweaks to keep the fleet competitive while preventing excessive disparities between boats.

For the sailors refinement usually starts with rig and sail trim, as these are the most flexible within class rules. But beyond the rig and sails, there are still plenty of tricks to be explored. The hull, rudder and keel are more difficult to modify due to their structural nature, but that doesn't mean sailors won't try. Polishing, fairing, aligning and fine-tuning appendages make small but crucial differences on

the water and top teams will experiment with every legal (and sometimes less legal) route available.

If a new class is launched without strict regulations already in situ, sailors will quickly exploit any gaps and before long the class can easily drift away from the original objective. Once this happens it's incredibly difficult to bring things back under control. What starts as a level playing field becomes an expensive arms race and the wider draw of the class is lost. Examples of excellent one-designs that have been through this cycle of peaking early, and expensively, then a period of retrenchment followed by a second wave of more sustainable growth include the J/70 and Melges 32. So if you're designing a new class, beware – because sailors are competitive animals and any slack in the regulations will soon be severely tested.

Nowhere is this more of an issue than personnel. One-design racing exposes crew performance with a greater emphasis on sailing skill, teamwork and strategy rather than, say, boat optimisation. I have no research to say that the best one-design teams tend to be more consistent in their personnel, but it feels as if this is true. Similarly, nowhere is the issue of pro vs am crew more hotly debated.

So how does stating the obvious – like telling you that water is wet – relate to IRC racing? Let me ask you this: if you had the chance to race your optimised IRC boat against a fleet of identical boats, would you adjust your sailing and development approach? The answer is almost certainly yes. Without the variable of differing boat designs, your focus would shift entirely to optimising boatspeed, crew work and equipment within a fixed set of constraints.

This shift can lead to significant performance gains, even without any changes to the boat itself. The ability to refine tactics, sail trim, boat handling and teamwork in a controlled, consistent environment allows you to push both boat and crew to a much higher level.

An example: even within the realms of one-design and class racing there is significant variation in performance across a fleet. To illustrate this, imagine applying IRC to a one-design class with the goal of adjusting times so that all boats would, in theory, finish simultaneously (the fundamental purpose of a rating system). In practice, even in tightly controlled one-design fleets, differences in crew skill and small optimisations lead to

## IRC Rules and Definitions

IRC Rules and Definitions are available to download at [ircrating.org](https://ircrating.org)



Countries with June-May certificate validity will continue to race under IRC 2024 until 31st May 2025

## IRC Member Offers

Don't forget that as an IRC certificate holder you are eligible for discounts from:

Seahorse Magazine  
SeaSure Tuff Luff

For full information see the Offers page on [ircrating.org](https://ircrating.org)



A chance to see what you are missing....



Just [click here](#) to claim your Seahorse **HALF PRICE Full Year Print Subscription**



Starting from the top  
Perfectly matching rig, rigging and superstructure at the first attempt  
Based on new research when the key suppliers can be many thousands of miles apart from each other





## Valid Boat Data online

The valid boat data for all currently rated boats is published online here: <https://ircrating.org/boat-data-for-valid-irc-certificates/>

You may purchase a full copy of the most recent certificate for a boat, within our policies, via your IRC Rule Authority. <https://ircrating.org/irc-rule/copy-certificate-policy/>



STEPHEN R CLOUTIER

Why IRC is such a beautiful thing. For over 10 years now IRC has encouraged simple, fast designs like the Cape 31... which in some weird kind of inverted reality are now winning in ORC too. Yes, they will struggle on handicap in lighter air, but would you prefer to own some knuckle-dragger that will nevertheless be extremely competitive if you opt for one of the alternative 'fairer' systems?

substantial time spreads. At the recent ClubSwan 50 Worlds the IRC-equivalent rating difference across the fleet was around 90 IRC points (0.090) over a short 30 to 50-minute race. Hence if the fleet had been racing under IRC the slowest boat would have needed a rating adjustment of 0.090 just to match the winner's corrected time.

In a larger one-design fleet, say the Etchells, these gaps can also be very pronounced, and the time difference between first and last is typically at least eight minutes or more – for boats that are supposedly identical. Over a 90-minute race the IRC-equivalent spread can exceed 75 IRC points (0.075). In real terms this is a huge range in terms of the change in the principal measured parameters.

Now let me come to my final point. When a competitive one-design or class boat enters a rating class it often performs exceptionally well, especially if the boat design has inherent qualities that align with the rating system. A prime example is the TP52 class (which performs well not just under IRC, by the way).

The TP52 is a highly refined design within a flexible enough rule framework. Its success can be attributed to strong class control – and here massive respect is owed to Rob Weiland for keeping it moving

forwards while staying on track. Thanks to tight class governance and a culture of continuous development, the TP52 has flourished for many years; the TP52 development pyramid is as sharp as it gets. The boats have undergone countless hours of boat-on-boat testing.

Equally, if slightly less exotic, the J/109 fleet in Ireland has many examples racing together and doing just fine under IRC. Also, considering that if you were designing an IRC-rated 31ft boat the Cape 31 might not be your first choice as starting point, this boat nevertheless performs admirably under IRC (and ORC), handicap performance driven upward by the learnings of one-design competition.

This highlights how a well-designed and, most importantly, well-sailed one-design can thrive in a rating environment, even if it wasn't originally conceived with rating optimisation in mind.

So what's the takeaway from all this? Simply put, the similarities and relationships between one-design racing, class racing and IRC racing are closer than ever. One-design and class boats can do surprisingly well under a rating system. Good sailors, good rules and a bit of creativity will always go a long way. So next time you think about IRC racing, remember: it's not just about the boat.

Dr Jason Smithwick, Rating Director



# Seahorse Magazine

## DEAR IRC MEMBER

I really hope you are enjoying your IRC edition of Seahorse magazine.

If you love what you are reading – did you know that there are 6 more editions of the magazine every year that you currently do not have access to with your IRC membership?

To ensure that you never miss out on all the news in international performance sailing we have two great offers available to you below:

1. Access to all 12 digital editions of *Seahorse* for just **Euro 27.50** (regular price Euro 55)

**Subscribe here**

2. Or have all 12 print copies delivered to your door for **Euro 45.00** (regular price Euro 90)

**Subscribe here**

All the best,

Andrew Hurst

Andrew Hurst, Editor

## Articles you may have missed

Just click the page below to access the full article.



A chance to see what you are missing....



Just **click here** to claim your Seahorse **HALF PRICE** Full Year Print Subscription

