

# Seahorse

## International Sailing

Issue 546 £7 US\$9.99

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didn't work...  
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**AUGUST 2025**  
The official  
magazine of the  
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**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](http://ircrating.org) for contact details.

## Admiral's Cup special edition

Courtesy of Seahorse International Sailing Magazine, in addition to these IRC issues you also have free access to the July 2025 issue, packed with top-tier sailing insights and expert commentary. This special edition includes exclusive features on the highly anticipated **Admiral's Cup** which starts on Saturday 19 July.

With this iconic event being scored using IRC it's shaping up to be one of the most competitive and closely watched regattas of the year.

Login details for this special issue ONLY:  
Email address: [info@rorcrating.com](mailto:info@rorcrating.com) Password: **IRC2025**

## Appendage Changes

An increasing number of owners are upgrading older boats, often including changes to appendages. Keel modifications, in particular, are significant and require full documentation – detailed drawings, material specifications – and the boat must be weighed and measured for an Endorsed certificate. If you alter or replace your rudder(s), or change how they are mounted, you must also inform the rating office. Even if the new rudder replicates

the original shape, we typically require drawings or photos, along with material details (e.g., a switch to a carbon stock). For an Endorsed certificate, weighing both the old and new rudders is generally necessary, along with possible remeasurement of overhangs. Please consult the rating office before making any changes and consider using the trial certificate facility to avoid unexpected rating outcomes.

## Stability Data

If you are racing offshore you may be required to have STIX and AVS stability information on your IRC certificate or other means of showing that your boat complies with OSR 3.04 stability requirements. Your boat may also require a World Sailing Plan Review Certificate (OSR 3.03). These are often overlooked in the flurry

to get everything ready for racing, so please check requirements for the races you are entering, well in advance, and see the IRC website for more information (<https://ircrating.org/irc-racing/race-management/>)



RORC/RICK TOMLINSON

# Less Maths, more sailing

IRC is distinctive in its philosophy: it rewards well-sailed boats over narrowly optimised designs, balancing fairness with innovation. This analysis explores how varying race conditions shape success under IRC and why over-optimisation, while alluring, often fails to deliver consistent wins.

The IRC Rule uses a confidential algorithm to assign a Time Correction Coefficient (TCC) to each yacht. This TCC attempts to estimate a boat's potential speed based on the key physical characteristics such as length, displacement, sail area and underwater appendages. The goal is not to make every race a dead heat, but to allow a wide range of designs to be competitive over time, emphasising crew skill and adaptability to the rule itself as factors in success.

One of IRC's great strengths lies in its resistance to over-optimisation. Unlike other rating rules where designers can 'game the system', tailoring boats too precisely to rule formulas through open access to the algorithm, IRC's own undisclosed but carefully developed algorithm reduces incentives for distortion. This results in a rule that, rather than rewarding 'rule-beaters', tends to favour seaworthy, versatile boats that perform well across the complete range of conditions.

In the world of yacht racing, conditions matter deeply. Wind strength, sea state, course and crew all influence whether a boat outperforms its rating.

Design features like waterline length and sail area predict performance potential, but it is how a boat sails in that day's specific conditions that determines whether it punches above or below its TCC.

Detailed 'analyses' by others may purport to show how wind and course variations affect ratings, and therefore how a single-number system like IRC cannot deliver a 'perfect' result, but the reality is that sailing is inherently unpredictable! Weather, crew decisions, tides, all ensure that no rating system can guarantee perfect fairness. Moreover, the freedom IRC owners enjoy to tailor their yacht for a particular course and venue naturally balances out many of these external variables, further levelling the playing field. So why overcomplicate the sport any further?

In light air smaller lower-rated boats often have an edge while heavy or high-rated boats struggle against their rating, conditions that also reward boats with a heavier DSPL/Length ratio and low wetted surface area, often features of older or dual-purpose yachts.

In contrast, during extended offshore races, or heavy-weather events, heavier more powerful boats come into their own. Designs like the JPK 10.80, J/122 and Ker 40 can often sustain higher average speeds over long distances and handle challenging sea states better than their lighter rivals. In the 2013



JAMES TOMLINSON

No one understands IRC racing better than ubiquitous and very fast French skipper Géry Trentesaux. Most years he appears with another new heavily optimised IRC design, carefully selected to match both his preferred style of offshore racing as well as any new rule changes. *Long Courier* (above) is this season's weapon of choice, a modified Jason Ker-designed Sydney GTS 43. Wins this year include the Myth of Malham and North Sea races. A good bet for Rolex Fastnet 2025... which Trentesaux last won in 2015

## IRC Rules and Definitions

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



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### 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/>

Fastnet *Night and Day* (a JPK 10.10) won overall, not merely due to its rating but because conditions matched its design strengths: good all-round ability, but especially good offshore in moderate conditions.

While the temptation to 'design to the rule' remains, IRC has evolved to penalise overly specialised designs. Boats optimised for a narrow performance window – such as flat-water, downwind conditions – may achieve momentary success but they struggle to win consistently. A classic example is the TP52, originally designed for windward-leeward quasi-one-design racing. Converted for IRC, TP52s often perform very well, especially in heavy-air races, but they also carry high ratings. This means even minor underperformance or adverse conditions can ruin their corrected-time result.

Similarly, custom-built 'IRC weapons' like *Rán* or *Ichi Ban* – the latter a Botín 52 that has dominated Australian IRC racing in the past – require professional preparation and a top crew to support their high ratings. These boats are at the limit of what the rule rewards and any mistake can lead to a quick slide down the results.

This reinforces IRC's core philosophy: while a boat can be technically superior, true performance lies in consistency, adaptability and seamanship, not just raw speed or extreme design.

The boats that succeed most consistently under IRC strike a balance between performance across a wide range of conditions and course types. They are often 'perfectly normal'; when rating their design features there is no one individual extremity but a sum of marginal gains that makes such a boat competitive in IRC.

French designer Jean-Pierre Kelbert's boats, especially the JPK 10.10, 10.80 and 11.80, are a good example of IRC-optimised versatility. *Courrier Recommandé*, a JPK 11.80, won the 2018 RORC Season's Points Championship and this design continues to place highly in offshore events – with more than one 11.80 serving as the smaller boat in the 2025 Admiral's Cup. These boats are light but not extreme, stiff without being punishing, and fast enough to compete without becoming overly reliant on specific conditions.

Jeanneau's Sun Fast 3200 and 3600 have also proved durable under IRC. They offer an appealing mix of simplicity, speed and rating efficiency. Boats

like *Foggy Dew* and *Bellino* always perform well in the RORC Offshore Series, especially in mixed conditions.

In addition, the Jason Ker designs (40,43,46 etc) are also consistent top performers in IRC. These 'higher'-performance boats are notable for their fine-tuned IRC optimisation. Géry Trentesaux's Ker 43 *Long Courier* is proving to be extremely competitive this season, benefiting from lightweight construction, deep keel design and plenty of sail. But none of these designs win automatically, they require excellent crews and good race planning to realise their rating.

Well-prepared cruiser-racers like the J/109 and J/122 regularly feature on IRC podiums. Their wide availability, dependable upwind performance and strong owner networks make them formidable. The J/109 is especially potent in mid-fleet battles, where its design characteristics deliver consistent boat speed rather than raw power.

One of IRC's key strengths is that it resists becoming a blueprint-driven game. There is no single 'winning design', only boats well suited to the challenges of that race on that day. A mid-sized cruiser-racer can beat a carbon-fibre race machine, given the right wind, tactical choices and crew performance. Likewise, no yacht can dominate every time, diversity in winners is built into the IRC system.

This pragmatic and simple balance between rating and reality fosters a healthy and inclusive racing environment. It rewards the elements that are at the heart of sailing itself: tactics, skill, reading of the weather and all-around performance. Yacht racing under the IRC rating system is a nuanced sport where conditions *can* influence success and over-optimisation can be a liability rather than an advantage. The IRC Rule remains relevant and respected because it embraces a diversity of designs while ensuring that seamanship, strategy and skill remain central to competition.

From light-wind classics like the JPK 10.10 to offshore workhorses like the Ker 40 and cruiser-racers like the J/109, the roll of IRC winners is varied. In a sport often obsessed with marginal gains, IRC is a reminder that consistency beats extremism; and that in yacht racing the right boat in the right hands, on the right day, can win.

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?

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All the best,

Andrew Hurst, Editor

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