

Richmond Yacht Club

Racing Survey Results 2011

Introduction

The last year or two has seen a decline in racing fleet sizes in Auckland, including at RYC events. RYC held a workshop with skippers and members to discuss problems and issues related to racing at the club. As a result it was recommended that skippers, members, crew and non-member race entrants be surveyed across a broad range of topics to ascertain problems and garner suggestions for improving racing at RYC. The results would be presented to the committee with the objective of implementing changes that would grow fleets and yacht racing in Auckland and RYC.

The survey is simple and was conducted on-line using Survey Monkey, a free internet resource. Survey Monkey (the free version) is quite limited, allowing only ten questions. The survey was split into two as more than ten questions and issues were surveyed. The survey closed in September 2011.

Response Rate

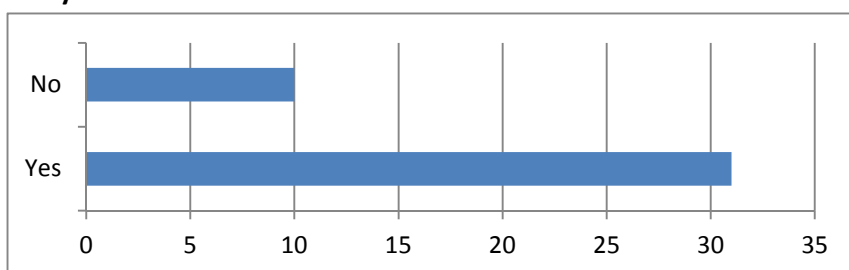
Approximately 41 responses were received for the first part and 37 for the second. Total responses per set question vary between 41 and 32, of which 31 were from club members. The free-form responses only received between 5 and 15 responses. There are about 200 club members so at best this represents a 16% sample, probably about average for this type of survey.

Results

The responses to each question are charted below. The horizontal axis corresponds to the number of responses per questions (note that not all start at 0). No cross tabulation of results has been carried at at this stage (mainly because the sample is quite small and I am quite lazy!).

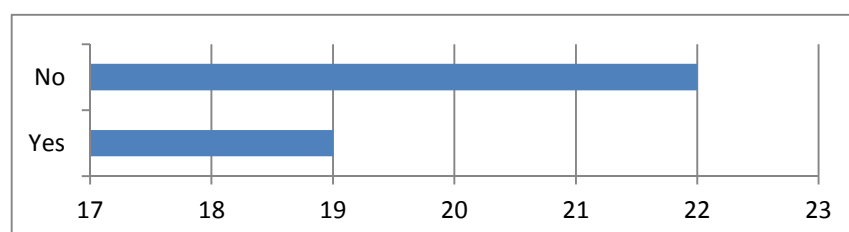
Comments are not to be construed as anything other than that. The RYC Committee will address issues as appropriate.

Are you an RYC member?



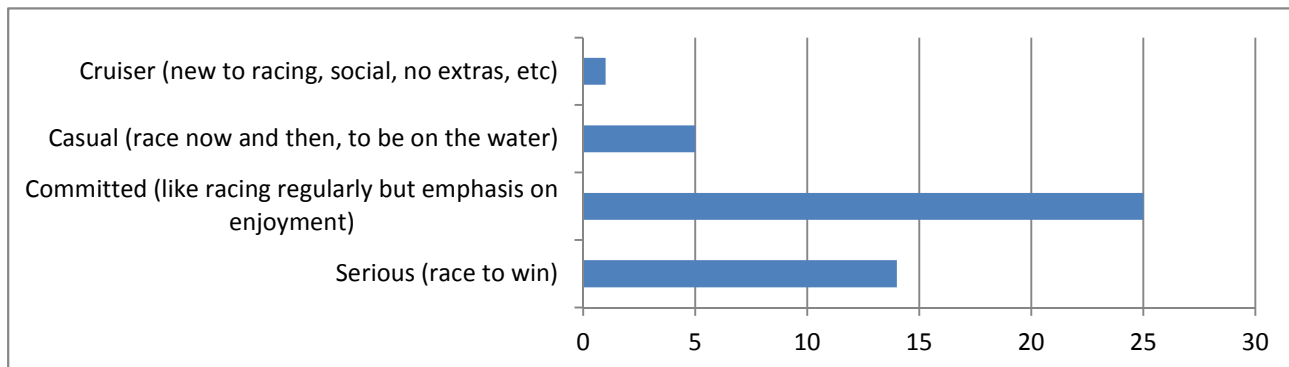
This represents a response rate of about 16% of the club membership. About 25% of responses were from non-club members, which provides an indication of views from others.

Do you currently use or have you previously purchased an RYC Sailpass (for annual race fees)?



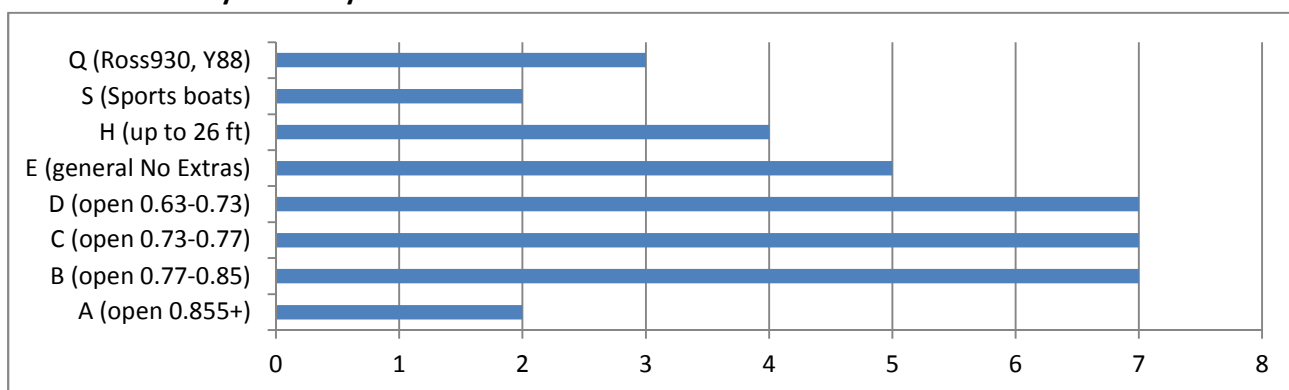
It was expected that this question would provide an indication whether or not regular racers responded. It can be inferred that more than 19, about 45%, are regular racers.

What best describes your approach to racing and attitude to competing?



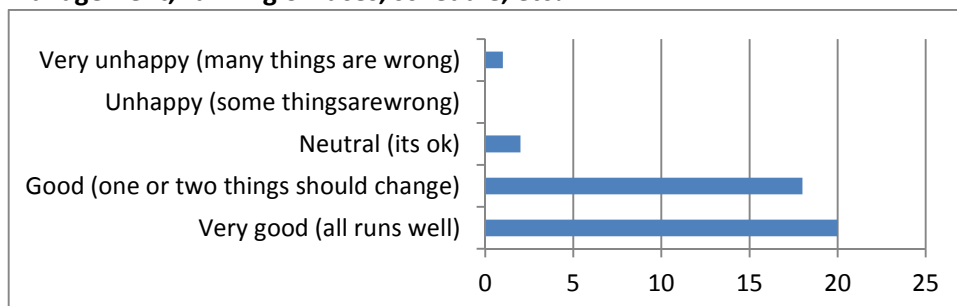
Overall, the vast majority of respondents were committed or serious racers. This would indicate that the level of racing should remain at a high level.

What division do you usually race in?



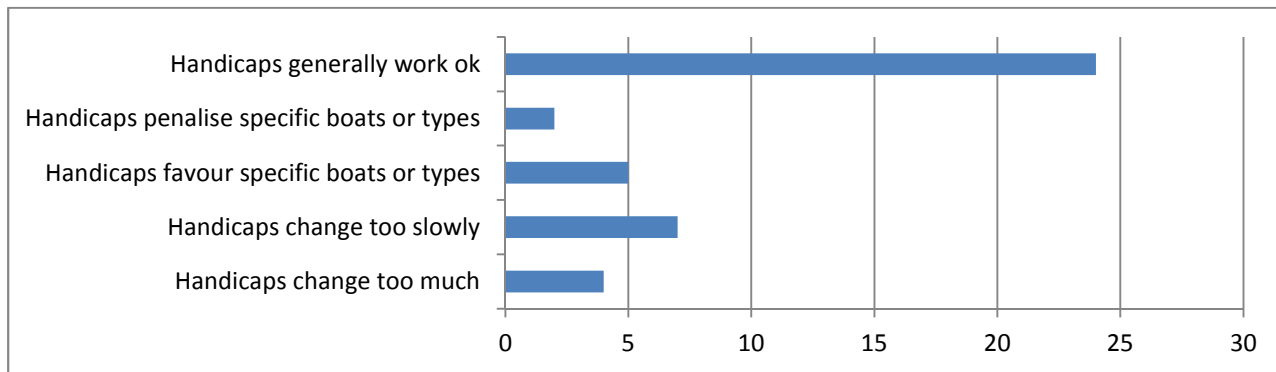
A fairly good spread of responses, presumably matching the overall fleet proportions.

Overall, how happy are you with racing at Richmond YC in terms of the general management, running of races, schedule, etc?



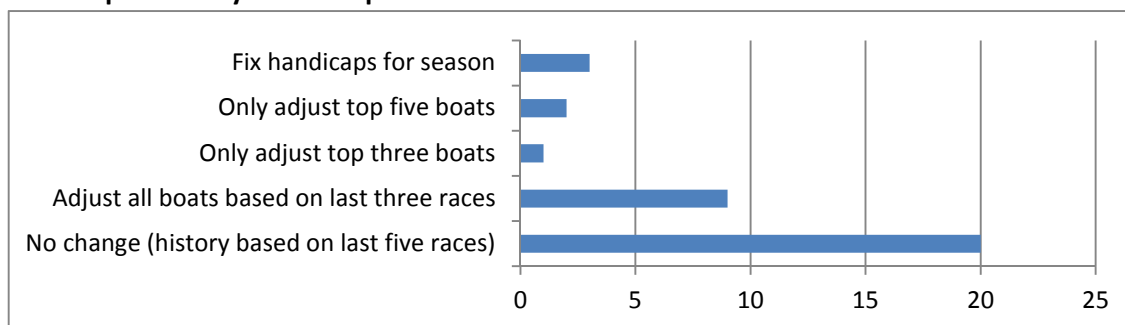
The overall impression is that respondents are happy with the current racing set up. Clearly a number of respondents feel that some improvements could be made.

Handicapping: this is based on general (all weather, winds, crews, etc) mixed fleet, boat/crew performance and is adjusted based on recent performance using RaceSystem software. How do you feel about handicapping?



The handicapping is generally viewed as being ok. Other responses are equally divided between favouring and penalising specific boats, between handicaps changing too quickly or too slowly. It can be inferred that the negative responses are boat specific. However, this represents about 33% of responses and clearly handicapping is an issue for respondents.

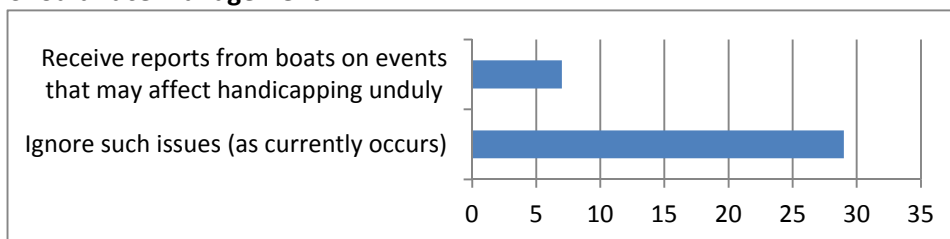
Handicap method you would prefer?



About 40% of respondents consider that handicaps should be changed using a different method to that currently in use. Overall it seems that adjustments based on the last three to five races is favoured.

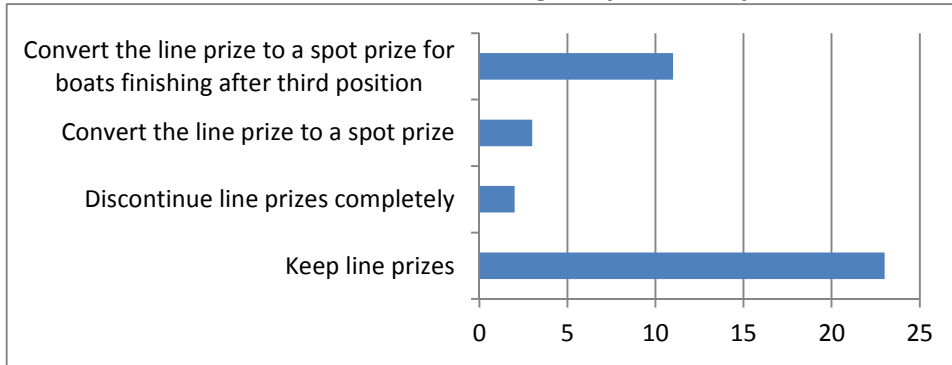
Handicaps: it is difficult to monitor boat performance during races. This may affect handicaps (eg a boat misses a mark and "wastes" 2 minutes, which will favourably adjust its handicap).

Should race management:



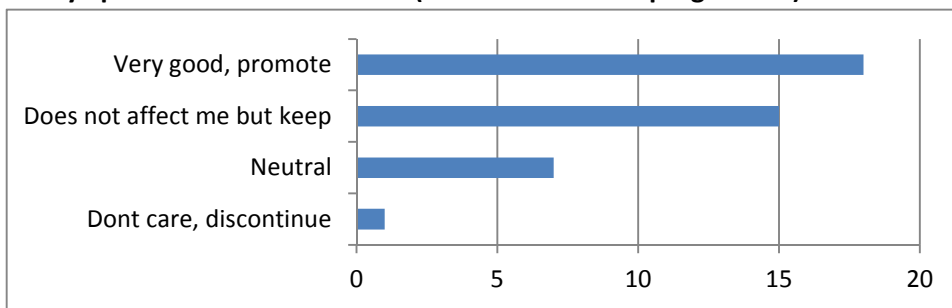
Overall respondents do not consider that such situations warrant more policing. This would indicate that the majority of racers race within the RRS and do not deliberately or tactically race to unfairly affect handicaps.

RYC offers a small line prize for first across the line in most divisions. Given that we race in mixed-boat fleets, is there merit in awarding line prizes? Do you think:



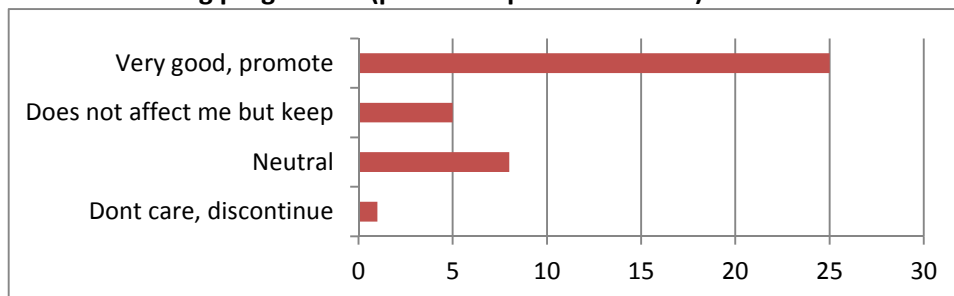
The current system is favoured although there is significant support for converting the line prize to a spot prize for boats finishing after third place (ie those boats that would not receive a handicap prize).

Friday Special must be continued (learn to race crew programme)



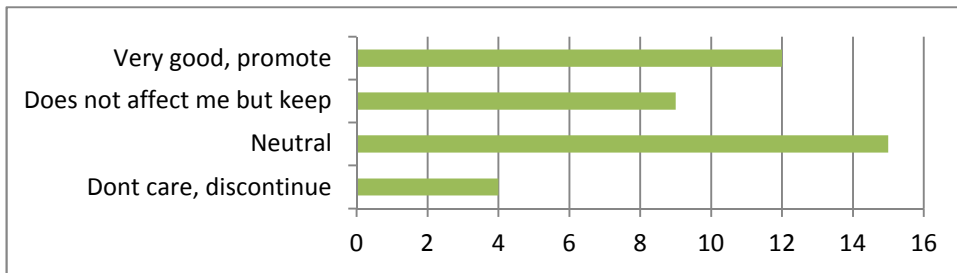
The Friday Special series is aimed at attracting new sailors to racing or sailing. Responses to the Friday Special concept are positive.

Start a mentoring programme (provide experienced crew) for new owners and racers



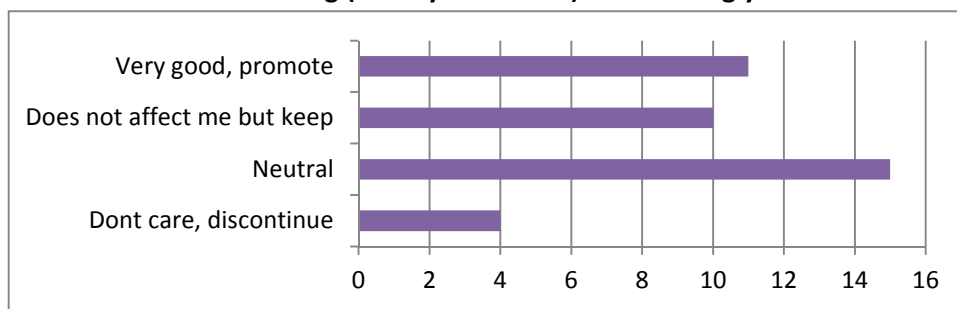
Queries regarding non-racing boat owners learning to race or gaining experience in racing motivated this question. The responses are positive. It is possible to expand the Friday Special to include this concept (this is in progress).

Provide a large incentive prize for series racers (one prize annually)



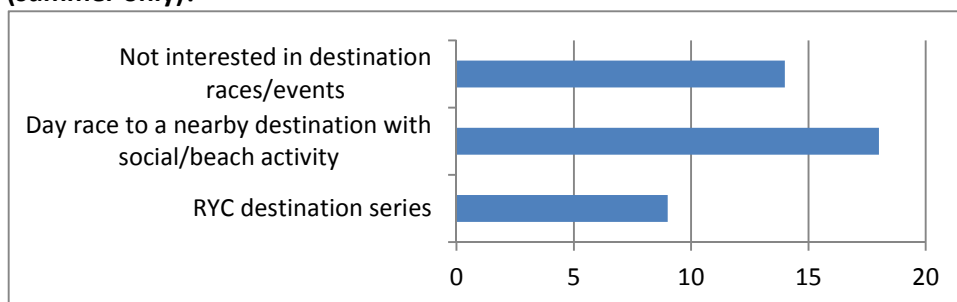
In previous years an incentive prize for those entering/racing a series was provided. It was mooted that reintroducing such a prize would help to attract racers to the RYC series races. Clearly there is support for such an initiative.

Promote destination racing (usually weekends) more strongly



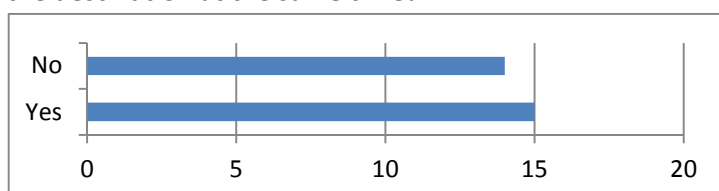
Most responses support the destination series being continued. About 45% of respondents are neutral or do not care about the destination races. This may reflect the individual interests of respondents. In any event it appears that there is scope for increasing the destination fleets, given that they are quite small at present.

Would you generally participate in any of the following cruising/weekend race options (summer only)?



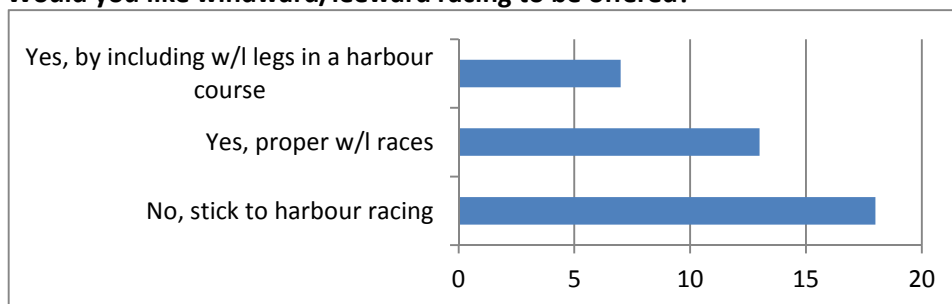
The results match the question above. There is clearly support for shorter races that allow racers to return to Auckland without having to overnight. It is important to include social activities after the race.

Destination races: should we use Mark Foy starts so all boats arrive at the destination at the same time?



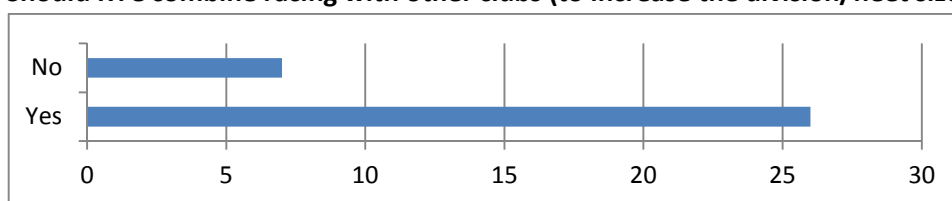
Responses are split evenly between the two options. It is an option that should be considered.

Would you like windward/leeward racing to be offered?



Slightly more than half the respondents would like windward/leeward racing to be offered. Somewhat unexpectedly about one third would like to race in proper w/l races. RYC does not own chase boats required for w/l racing and this is a limiting factor (crews and expenses).

Should RYC combine racing with other clubs (to increase the division/fleet size)?



The main objective would be to increase the fleet sizes, particularly in some divisions, and secondly to reduce the duplication of clubs. This concern is due to the recent decline in racing fleets across Auckland and RYC. The overwhelming response is to combine racing with other clubs.

What do you think, if any, are the problems with RYC races?

This was an open-ended response question and the results are summarised below. 23 responses were received

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| Abandon the first January Wednesday night race. All my crew have young children and 4 weeks annual leave. Hold a race if you have to but outside the Wednesday Series. Last year only 4 or 5 boats competed which makes the Series a farce. |
| Races are usually good, and courses relevant to conditions. Do not have any issues with Races and think that committee does an excellent job |
| Xx boat needs over 15 knots of wind to shift her 12 tonnes. RYC destination races never have much wind, or they have too much. |
| Can't think of any problems - I love racing with RYC! It's so well organised and v enjoyable. |
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| Most people are time constrained, so half day races could appeal - leaves rest of weekend free. |
| I enjoy my racing at RYC, we race in all conditions and the courses are long and interesting, the only thing that bugs me is the handicapping system, last year I was handicapped out of the series, this year after five races the boat that kicks my *** still has a lower handicap than me? |
| Handicapping is still seen as unjust, in some cases the variance from PHRF and RYC handicaps is large and they appear to change in ways that don't make sense. More transparency as to how handicaps are selected and altered may dispel this issue. |
| The weekly prizes for 1st on line & 1, 2 & 3 on handicap keep people interested & able to win a prize. |
| The handicapping system makes no sense. Doing extra badly in one race means you are highly likely to win the next. It should be a fixed handicap for the season based on the boat statistics - not crew performance. Changing the crew each week should not affect handicap. Surely all boats in a one-design fleet should have the same handicap. |

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| I don't think there is any issue. I think this is the general trend |
| RYC & PCC are both very similar, targeting the same fleet of boats with similar activities. |
| Speaking of Wed night racing only, our initial h/c was way off and dropped all season but even at the end of the season, we still gave time to boats that we had never beaten on line. More care needs to be taken on the first crack at the h/c. We race each season with RYC and can't see why our final h/c from the year before is not the start point for the following season. I would love to do some W/L sprints and would even forego a Wed night if they were offered. No other club seems to offer these, other than for some of the class boats. |
| Need to work more on boats initial handicap for a series. Our experience is that this is the single biggest factor in determining the final series results, accepted a boat does the full series. If a boat isn't within approx 0.01 initially, by the time the handicap system adjusts the boat will either be out of the series or in a very strong position to do well, neither is good. Whilst our focus isn't solely to win, it is very demotivating to sail well, know you've sailed well and be in the back third of the fleet, repeatedly. |
| The Wed night race is too long for our fleet who are the second or third to start and always the last to come home. |
| None |
| Nothing extra to report other than that in the survey. |
| divisions too small |
| Not enough one class boats |
| I would like to join the Destination series, but it has clashed with events from other clubs. I enjoy the Wed night series. |
| Time keeping is poor. There is no excuse not to use accurate GMT for start sequences. Failure to postpone starts when no wind and tide mean boats have to anchor or motor around the start box. Seeming reluctance to shorten courses when appropriate |
| Generally good, cannot think of any areas to improve off-hand. |
| Winter races - smaller boats should do a shorter course. |
| I believe the 3 handed / fully crewed split in the winter series has fragmented the fleets . I have 6 crew members to call on but have trouble rustling up 3 or 4 for a race ...if i entered a 3 handed division i would conceivably have more crew problems... I would prefer to see a fully crewed division only |

The repeated responses include positive comments, issues with handicapping and the length of races for smaller boats. Some issues relate to race management.

Do you have any suggestions to improve racing, fleet size, etc at RYC?

Seventeen responses were received.

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| Advertise races at other clubs and in magazines(can be costly) /local papers. Convince paper to print article about the club /races as happened with the Friday Night series. Promote Friday night to increase membership. |
| Have an "engine allowed" division in the Destination series. |
| Coordination with other clubs. |
| Maybe inter club racing, its just a bad year, fall out from the recession I think, not a lot of money around, the RYC offers cheap racing compared to the NZRYS, hopefully it will slowly pick up again. |
| Fewer destinations but make them a bigger deal larger prizes, bigger beach party, the commitment to so many summer weekends may be a deterrent. However since the series has been dropping in numbers over the last years every year the series is changed to try to fix it, does it now just need some stability to settle in. Communication on the final destination may also encourage no racing members to join us at the aftermatch. |
| some longer all day races in summer for the non cruisers/destination racers, more shorthanded races (divisions) |
| More mentoring opportunities for slow/ inexperienced skippers. Mark Foy starts as suggested for destinations races is a great idea, currently i'd arrive some hours after the BBQ was over..... |
| Introduce/ support one-design/ no handicap racing. Shorter legs/ more legs/ triangles/ figure 8/ sausages. Make links with a disability sailing group - involve members in creating a community. Encourage members/ crew to go out on the committee boat. Ask crews the type of courses they like - maybe a winning crew could choose the next course (from an expertly picked limited selection). |
| we could actively invite and seek people and boats to participate |
| Inter club challenge? |
| Would like to race in some windward / leeward races. Maybe one or two of the winter and wednesday series could be w/l's. |
| Not to limit the size of crews in no extra races. |
| need to get crew to be more committed but not sure how as most are not members |
| Combine Clubs to promote one class racing |

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| Countdowns to start over the radio would be good. Don't set over long courses and have the results ready immediately the last boat finishes (computers, mobile phones) - this will draw the crews into the club. Different divisions should be the same size to avoid it being harder to win in one division than another. More windward starts |
| Liaise more with the other yacht clubs around the larger races - there has been talk on Crew.org of a combined Around Rangitoto race which would be good idea. |
| i think RYC racing is run very well especially compared to other clubs. Cost wise is excellent value. only comment would be to try and avoid running the same course more than once in a row but acknowledge it is difficult given the needs of the different fleets. fleet sizes are under pressure everywhere not just RYC it is a fact of life now unfortunately. |
| Push or promote the get to know your boat by racing it, be safer when cruising as you will understand and have confidence in your boat |

The comments are all relevant and will be addressed by the Committee

Individual Comments

Five respondents agreed to discuss the survey and ideas with the Rear Commodore (John Davies). John spoke to four of the respondents.

Comments generally reinforce the above responses

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee assess and respond to the survey results. It is apparent that not all issues noted are able to be addressed by the Club. However, there are a number of issues that can be reviewed with the aim of improving racing and the services the Club has to offer. It is likely that the current quiet financial times will continue to make it difficult to grow fleets but the Club is committed to rectify problems and implement new initiatives that will at least retain current fleet levels.

It is recommended that the Committee report outcomes to members in six and twelve months' time

Author: John Davies, September 2011