

# 2026 Racer's Guide

The Finger Lakes Yacht Club, Village Marina, Watkins Glen, NY

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Please send any comments, questions, or corrections to:  
[editor@flyc.us](mailto:editor@flyc.us)

## Welcome Racers!

by Don Swanson

FLYC Rear Commodore

### Let the 2026 Season Begin!

Ahoy, Racers!

It's been a long winter and I am looking forward to seeing all of you out on the race course again this summer. As you can see, your Race Committee has been hard at work over the winter to review our racing program and to make it more rigorous and more consistent with racing and handicapping processes used at other yacht clubs across the country. Although we've made every effort to consider various situations that might come up, we recognize that we may have missed something and welcome your feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Please note that the FLYC racing program is open to all sailors. You are not required to be a club member in order to race, however, membership may be required to qualify for certain prizes or formal recognition in races sponsored by the club. If you do wish to join the club, however, a membership application is included in this packet for your convenience.

That said, I'll see you in the marina and on the water!  
Cheers!

- Don

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You can contact the race committee by sending an email to:

[race@flyc.us](mailto:race@flyc.us)



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## Overview

The Finger Lakes Yacht Club (FLYC) Race Program consists of multiple events that span the available boating season. Race activities are managed by the FLYC Race Committee and many volunteers, most of whom are the racers themselves. One particularly attractive aspect of the FLYC program is the camaraderie between competitors and the degree to which they help one another improve their skills. This provides for an environment where the racing is enjoyable, yet still competitive.

Races are organized into four general categories, which are detailed elsewhere in this document:

- The FLYC Summer Series
- The “Fun Race” Series
- The Commodore's Cup
- Invitational races organized by other clubs

FLYC racers are handicapped using a modified US Sailing's Portsmouth Yardstick. Scoring is done using a low-points system, also with some local modifications.

Protests are strongly discouraged.

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## Race Program Objectives

The topic of sailboat racing, handicapping, and scoring is rife with opportunities to explore topics in extreme depth. (I.e., go down a bottomless rabbit hole.) Therefore, the authors believe it's important to state high level objectives of the FLYC racing program so that a tempting rabbit hole doesn't turn into a needless distraction or point of contention.

Program objectives can be summarized as follows:

- **Have fun.** Our #1 objective. This is supposed to be a recreational outlet, not a cause of stress or dissention.
- **Fleet growth.** The program should be structured in a way that makes it inviting to new sailors and provides a path for all participants to grow and develop their sailing skills.

- **Transparency.** Participants should have the opportunity to understand how the program is structured, how it works, and why things are the way they are.
- **Codified, consistent processes.** In support of transparency, participants should be aware of the processes used in the daily operations of the FLYC racing program.
- **Education.** The program should promote participants to seek out ways to build their skills in both sailing and general seamanship.

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# General Race Program Policies

Some general policies that need to be mentioned somewhere (so why not here):

- Participation in FLYC sailboat races is contingent on each boat completing a registration process for the Race Committee to assign as accurate a handicap to each competitor as possible.
- FLYC sailboat races are supported by FLYC membership dues. While anyone is welcome to compete in the races, only FLYC member boats are eligible for prizes. This means that only the top-scoring member boats will be recognized during award ceremonies.

- Participation in any events sanctioned or organized by the FLYC means that the participant (whether they are a member or not) is implicitly affirming that they will abide by the rules and standards set by the FLYC.
- Unless specified otherwise, the FLYC Race Program is operated in compliance with rules, regulations, and practices as defined by US Sailing, the governing body for sailboat racing in the United States.

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## FLYC Race Events

The Finger Lakes Yacht Club organizes multiple sailboat racing events each season:

### FLYC Summer Series

The **FLYC Summer Series** consists of eight (8) races held throughout the sailing season. In keeping with the general practices of other yacht clubs, the two worst (i.e., highest) scores for each boat will be thrown out when computing series totals. The FLYC member boat with the lowest score will be recognized as the winner of the Summer Series at the Club's Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet. Courses are defined based on weather conditions and prevailing winds.

### The Commodore's Cup Race

The **Commodore's Cup Race** is a long-distance race (typically 10-30 nautical miles) along a course defined by the FLYC Commodore or his designee. Special rules apply for this race to allow for the Race Committee to manage the event in a manner that allows all competitors to finish the race in time to participate in after-race activities. These rules are explained in the *Commodore's Cup Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions* posted prior to the event. In recent years, this race has been opened up

to other clubs on Seneca Lake as an invitational event with pre- and post-race social events scheduled at the starting and finishing locations of the race.

### Just For Fun Races

Finally, the Club also organizes a series of "fun" races throughout the year. While these races are also scored, the scores are independent of the Summer Series. These races include:

- **Rust Removal Race.** Usually the first race of the season. The objective is to allow competitors to "get the rust out" after a winter without any sailing or racing.
- **Cock of the Walk Race.** A race typically held mid-season featuring a Le Mans start and finish where crews begin and end the race at a predetermined location on shore, sprinting to and from their boats. It is open to all sailors; one need not be a FLYC member to qualify for prizes. Special rules are posted prior to this race. This race has a designated perpetual trophy for the winner.
- **Grape Harvest Race.** Held in the fall (late September or early October), it is typically run on a reverse-handicap basis, meaning that competing boats are assigned a starting time

based on their handicap, with the finish order determined by the order in which the boats cross the finish line.

- **Gear Buster Race.** Traditionally, this is the season-ending race, the last one to be held each season. The name comes from the fact that winds tend to be stronger late in the fall and, without additional events scheduled, skippers tend to push their boats harder (and therefore tend to break things more frequently).

Beginning in 2026, the four **Fun Races** listed above will be scored as a series. The best 3 of 4 race scores will be included and the worst score will be discarded for the purposes of calculating the cumulative series score.

By consensus of the FLYC Board of Directors and Race Committee, no Moss Factors will be used in 2026 Fun Races.

The FLYC also participates, on an invitational basis, in races hosted by other clubs on the lake. A long-standing favorite is the **Barge Race**, organized and managed by the Seneca Yacht Club (SYC). Because this race is managed by the SYC, only top-scoring SYC member boats are eligible for prizes and awards, however, FLYC boats have been invited to compete for many years. It occurs the Saturday following Labor Day in September, beginning and ending at the Seneca Yacht Club in Geneva, NY. The course runs from Geneva, around the Navy barge, and back to Geneva (approximately 24nm). Start times are staggered (reverse-handicap). FLYC members typically plan a dish-to-pass meal at the SYC after the race.

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## Registering to Participate in FLYC Racing

To maintain consistent standards and the fairest environment possible, the FLYC Race Committee requires that each boat wishing to participate in club-sponsored events register prior to the event in question. The goals of the registration process include:

- Confirm the identification of the boat's make, model, hull number, and other critical data.
- Confirm rigging and sail measurements, along with other key performance parameters.
- Generate an accurate racing handicap.
- Maintain up-to-date contact information for each participant.

The registration process must be performed if any of the following conditions are met:

- A new competitor or boat joins the race fleet.
- A boat's ownership changes.
- The sail inventory for a boat changes. (E.g., new sail, different sail, etc.)

- Modifications are made to a boat's rigging or spars. (E.g., new spinnaker or whisker pole.)
- At the beginning of each race season.

The process is not meant to be burdensome. Where possible, the registration process will be abbreviated to include only those factors that have changed since the last assessment for each vessel.

If a competitor believes the handicap they have been assigned is erroneous, they are required to bring this up with the Race Committee as soon as the discrepancy is detected. A Race Committee member will meet with them at the earliest opportunity to verify all the data used to generate the handicap as well as to step through the process with the competitor.

Please note that, because US Sailing is the sanctioning body for sailboat racing in the United States, only data sources recognized by US Sailing can be considered when computing handicaps.

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# Race Handicaps

## Portsmouth Yardstick

The FLYC uses the Portsmouth Yardstick (PY) handicapping system, as managed by US Sailing, to facilitate the racing of diverse sailboat classes on a relatively level playing field. Individuals designated by the Race Committee have been trained and authorized to assign handicaps to members of the FLYC race fleet using a process defined in the *FLYC Race Management Manual*. Handicaps are assigned according to the following hierarchy:

- A current handicap certificate from a body recognized by US Sailing.
- A pre-computed handicap listed in the US Sailing Portsmouth Yardstick database.
- A pre-computed handicap listed in the US Sailing PHRF database.
- A derived (i.e., computed) handicap generated using the process in the PY Handicapper's Manual.

The actual handicapping process is defined in detail in the *FLYC Race Management Manual* and has been codified in an Excel spreadsheet used by FLYC handicappers. An overview of the handicapping process can be found on the back of the *FLYC Handicap Application* and on page 8 of this document.

**NOTE:** Race handicaps are determined by the Race Committee managing a particular race. When FLYC boats participate in invitational events hosted by other clubs, the hosting club's race committee will make the final determination of a boat's handicap rating.

## Moss Factors

In addition to the PY handicaps assigned by the Race Committee, the FLYC utilizes a "golf handicap" (colloquially referred to as a "Moss Factor") as a local handicap adjustment. The purpose of this adjustment is to make FLYC racing more

competitive. This is done using a mathematical formula to reduce the range of corrected elapsed finish times for the local race fleet. Additional benefits of this adjustment include:

- Allow beginners to sail more competitively against seasoned veterans.
- Provide seasoned, veteran racers with incentives to continue to improve their sailing skills.

Moss factors are cumulative through the sailing season and carry over from one year to the next.

Moss factors apply to a specific boat and owner. If a boat changes hands, the Moss factor for that boat is reset to zero.

Moss factors are used only for FLYC races. Per US Sailing rules, they cannot be used for inter-club events. Therefore, they are not used in invitational events such as the Commodore's Cup or the Barge Race.

Moss factors, and the equations used to calculate them, are subject to periodic review by the FLYC Race Committee and can be changed in the following manner if deemed appropriate:

- Equations used to calculate the Moss Factor shall be reviewed annually to ensure they are functioning as intended. Adjustments to the algorithm may only be made between race seasons.
- Moss Factors assigned to individual boats shall be reviewed annually by the Race Committee. Systemic adjustments should be limited to an annual basis between race seasons.

**Exception:** If it is discovered that the Moss Factor is being computed or assigned in a manner proven to be erroneous, the Race Committee shall make corrections as quickly as practical as specified by the current version of US Sailing *Racing Rules of Sailing*.

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# Race Day Requirements for Competitors

## Skippers' Meeting

Each competing boat is required to send a representative to the pre-race Skippers' Meeting. (Attendance by the entire crew is encouraged.) Failure to attend the meeting will result in the boat not being scored. The purpose of this Skippers' Meeting is to accomplish the following tasks:

- Registration of all competitors.
- Crew pickup/assignments, if needed.
- Description of the course to be sailed.
- Special race instructions, if any.
- Review of VHF communication procedures.
- Description of the starting sequence, signals used, and start time(s).

## Equipment Requirements

All competing boats must satisfy USCG and New York State minimum equipment carriage requirements to compete.

All competing boats must have a working marine VHF radio. All on-the-water communications is done via marine VHF on a channel announced at the pre-race Skippers' Meeting. The VHF radio is also how competitors notify the Race Committee when they cross the finish line at the end of a race.

It is highly recommended that each competing vessel have a GPS or other timepiece that can be synchronized with the official clock used to record race start and finish times and to help them start each race properly.

## General Race Policies

Unless stated otherwise in the *Race Instructions*, there is a time limit of 60 minutes for a boat reaching the first mark and a limit of 180 minutes to finish the course. If these limits become unrealistic due to light winds, the Race Committee will determine if a race will be abandoned or rescheduled to another date or time.

The Committee Boat has the authority for maintaining the flow and safety of the race. The race can be shortened if wind and lake conditions change. Per US Sailing *Racing Rules of Sailing*, a race can be shortened, but it cannot be lengthened.

## Finishing A Race

Standard racing rules define a boat finishing when any portion of its hull or sails "breaks the plane" of the finish line. FLYC practice, however, is that a boat finishes when its helmsman (or the position where the helmsman would normally be) crosses the finish line. This practice is to accommodate vessels being single-handed when finish times are being self-reported (i.e., when there are no race officials monitoring the finish line).

All start and finish times are recorded to the nearest second for scoring purposes.

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# Race Scoring Processes

## Single Races

Race scoring is done utilizing a modified low-points system similar to one described by US Sailing.

Competing boats are awarded points based on where they finish when sorted by corrected elapsed time (CET):

- First place boat is awarded 1 point.
- Second place boat is awarded 2 points.
- Third place boat is awarded 3 points.
- Etc.

Boats that start the race but do not finish (DNF) are awarded the number of points equal to the number of boats starting in that race.

Boats that do not start (DNS) or do not compete are awarded 1 plus the number of boats that competed, or 8 points, whichever is greater. (This is done to encourage race attendance among competitors.)

Boats that are disqualified due to a rule infraction or penalty (DSQ or DNE) are awarded 2 plus the number of boats that competed. Note that, per the *Racing Rules of Sailing*, some of these penalties cannot be excluded as a “throw out” for series totals (DNE).

## Series Race Scoring

For a race series consisting of three or more races, each competitor is allowed to throw out the worst results of between 25%-33% of the number of races in that series. For the FLYC Summer Series, this means that the highest two scores for the summer will be discarded when computing series totals. For

the FLYC Fun Race Series, the highest score (1 race) will be discarded.

In the event of a tie, standard tie-breaking processes as defined by US Sailing are employed. The steps below are utilized until the tie is broken:

- The boat with the most first place finishes will be ranked ahead of the other.
- If there is a tie, then the boat with the most second place finishes will be declared the winner.
- If there remains a tie, then the boat with the most third place finishes will be declared the winner.
- If there is still a tie, then the boat with the best finish in the most recent race will be declared the winner.

Any score resulting from a non-excludable disqualification (DNE) cannot be used as a throw-out.

## FLYC Scoring Conventions

### Time Limits

Unless stated otherwise at the pre-race Skippers' Meeting, each club race has a time limit of three (3) hours. Any boats not finishing within this time are scored as DNF and will receive points as described above. In addition, if none of the boats in a race can round the first mark within one (1) hour, the race will be either postponed, abandoned, or cancelled, as determined by the Race Committee.

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# Prizes and Awards

In a practice consistent with other yacht clubs in our region, only FLYC member boats are eligible for prizes or awards in races managed by the FLYC unless stated otherwise in the *Notice of Race, Sailing*

*Instructions*, or by vote of the FLYC Board of Directors.

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# The FLYC Handicapping Process

Here's what happens once you turn in your Handicap Application:

A member of the Race Committee will look up critical data about your boat from verifiable sources such as *US Sailing* and *SailboatData.com*. Data include dimensions such as (but not limited to) length, beam, draft, displacement, reported and measured sail area, principal rig dimensions, and precomputed ratings (if any).

Since US Sailing is the governing body for the sport of sailboat racing, data from that organization is given precedent over data from other sources. However, if there is a significant difference between US Sailing and other sources, the Race Committee may elect to measure the questioned data directly on your vessel. If found to be inaccurate, actual measurements will be used and US Sailing will be contacted.

Principal measurements from your boat, rig, and sails will be used to compute a "derived rating" (DR) for your vessel. This will be used later in the process.

If your boat (Note: Your specific boat, not someone else's) has been previously handicapped by an organization recognized by US Sailing, and there have been no changes to your hull, rig, or sails since that certificate was issued, that rating will be assigned to your boat. You will need to submit a copy of your rating certificate with your application or this to occur. If the certificate is for a rating system other than Portsmouth Yardstick (e.g., PHRF, AmeriCaps, ORR, IMS, etc.), the rating will be converted to a

Portsmouth Yardstick rating using formulas from the *Portsmouth Yardstick Handicapper's Manual*.

If there is no evidence of a prior rating assignment, the Race Committee will use the published rating in the most recent issue of *US Sailing's Portsmouth Yardstick* (PY) handicap document.

If your vessel make/model does not have a precomputed PY rating, then the Race Committee will look for a precomputed Performance Handicap Race Fleet (PHRF) rating. Since these ratings are assigned by region, we will attempt to find a rating assigned either in the Great Lakes or on the Chesapeake before resorting to rating assignments from more distant regions. The Race Committee reserves the right to take PHRF ratings from various regions and average them.

In all cases, the assigned ratings will be compared to the derived rating computed above as a sanity check to ensure they are reasonably similar.

If no preassigned handicap ratings can be found for your boat from sources recognized by US Sailing, the Race Committee will assign a provisional rating based on the derived rating computed from principal boat and rig data. This rating will be subject to review at the end of the season. Rating adjustments will be based on "Moss Factors" generated by the FLYC scoring program over the course of one or more sailing seasons.

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# 2026 FLYC Calendar – \*Revised\*

Due to the delay in launching of boats because of high water levels, our club calendar has received a significant number of modifications. (See highlighted events below.) Please check the club web site (<http://www.FLYC.US>) for the most current information.

## Regular/Repeating Events

**Post-Mortem Racing Social.** After every club race at 1700 on the lawn by the marina flagpole. BYOB/Snack to share. Open to racers and non-racers alike. Bragging and boasting mandatory.

## March

27 **Deadline for newsletter articles.**

## April

01 **April Newsletter Publication Date.**  
15 **Earliest possible launch date** (per slip contract).

## May

01 **Membership renewal deadline.**  
08-10 *\*NASCAR at the Glen*  
22 **Deadline for newsletter articles.**  
24 **Memorial Day Flag Raising & Picnic.** (1700)  
30 **Rust Removal Race.** Practice race. (1300)

## June

01 **June Newsletter Publication Date.**  
06 **FLYC Nautical Swap Meet** (1000)  
06 **Summer Series Race #1.** (1300)  
12 **Commodore's Cup Pre-Race Social.** Racers from SYC have been invited to join us for dinner and campfire! BYOB (1700)  
13 **Commodore's Cup Race.** Race from Watkins Glen to Geneva with our friends from SYC. Details TBA. (0900)  
13 **Commodore's Cup Post-Race Celebration.** Hosted at the SYC club house. Details TBA.  
20 *\*Watkins Glen Waterfront Festival & Cardboard Boat Races.*  
27 **Summer Series Race #2.** (1300)

## July

04 **Summer Series Race #3.** (1300)  
04 **Independence Picnic.** (1700)  
04 *\*Watkins Glen Independence Day Fireworks (2145)*  
10-14 *\*Lake Ontario 300 Challenge, Port Credit, Ontario*  
11 **Summer Series Race #4.** (1300)  
18 **Make-Up Race #1.** If needed. (1300)  
24 **Deadline for newsletter articles.**  
25 **Cock of the Walk Race.** (1300)  
31-8/02 *\*ABC-FLX Boater's Weekend. All FLYC members invited to join!*

## August

7/31-02 *\*ABC-FLX Boater's Weekend.. All FLYC members invited to join!*  
01 **August Newsletter Publication Date.**  
08 **Summer Series Race #5.** (1300)  
14-16 *\*Italian-American Festival (Watkins Glen)*  
15 **Make-Up Race #2.** If needed. (1300)  
15 **Commodore's Picnic.** (1700)  
22 **Summer Series Race #6.** (1300)  
29 **Handicapper's Special Race.** (1300)

## September

05 **Summer Series Race #7.** (1300)  
05 **Harvest Picnic.** (1700)  
05-07 *\*Vintage Grand Prix Weekend*  
11-13 **FLYC Club Cruise to Geneva.** Joint cruise with the ABC-FLX chapter.  
12 *\*Seneca Yacht Club Barge Race, Geneva, NY (0900) All FLYC members invited! Preregistration required.*  
12 **Geneva Cruise Social.** Held at SYC club house or at Seneca Marina Park grounds. Details TBA.  
18 **Deadline for newsletter articles.**  
19 **Summer Series Race #8.** (1300)  
25-27 *\*SV True Love 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration*

## October

01 **October Newsletter Publication Date.**  
02-05 *\*Annapolis Powerboat Show.*  
03 **Grape Harvest Race.** (1300) Join in this annual reverse-handicap race!  
03 **End of Season Picnic.** (1700)  
09-12 *\*Annapolis Sailboat Show.*  
10 **Gear Buster Race or Make-Up Race #3, if needed.** (1300)  
17 **Gear Buster Race alternate date.** (1300)  
31 **Marina Haulout Deadline** (per slip contract).

## November

TBA **Member Banquet & Annual Meeting.**  
20 **Deadline for newsletter articles.**

## December

01 **December Newsletter Publication Date.**

## January 2027

22 **Deadline for newsletter articles.**

\* Non-FLYC event.

**NOTE:** There is a \$10 charge for non-members/guests attending FLYC picnics and meals.

# Finger Lakes Yacht Club

## 2026 Membership Application

Membership renewals are due by May 1st, 2026. **Annual dues are \$45.**  
Please send this form and a check to:



Finger Lakes Yacht Club, Inc.  
c/o Katie Alley, Secretary  
PO Box 224  
Watkins Glen, NY 14891

Are you also a member of America's Boating Club (US Power Squadrons)? If yes, check this box.

Application:  New Member  Renewal

**Important:** Please include the names of all of your household family members. This will ensure that membership privileges are awarded properly.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Info: Renewing members - check this box if your address is unchanged from 2025

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list all email addresses you would like to receive digital communications to.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Boat Name \_\_\_\_\_ Location/Slip # \_\_\_\_\_

Power

Make/Model/Year \_\_\_\_\_ Length \_\_\_\_\_ Type  Sail

Please indicate which areas interest you:

Racing  Cruising  Social activities  Newsletter  Women's Sailing Team  Boating/Sailing Classes

Other club activities you'd like to see? Email secretary@flyc.us

By this application, I/we promise to uphold the By-laws of the Finger Lakes Yacht Club, Inc. and to comply with its rules and regulations.

Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Finger Lakes Yacht Club – Race Handicap Application

## Instructions

1. Please provide the information requested. If you're not sure, leave blank. Sail measurements must be witnessed by a member of the race committee or certified by a sailmaker.
2. Attach any previous handicap/rating certificates or measurement forms, if available.
3. Submit form to any member of the FLYC Race Committee.

Owner		Boat	
Name		Name	
Cell / Text		Make / Model	
Email		Year	
		Hull / Sail #	

Miscellaneous Boat Data						
Engine	<input type="checkbox"/> Inboard	<input type="checkbox"/> Outboard	<input type="checkbox"/> Sail Drive	<input type="checkbox"/> Retractable Outboard		
Propeller	<input type="checkbox"/> In Aperture	<input type="checkbox"/> Exposed Strut	<input type="checkbox"/> Strut Drive	<input type="checkbox"/> Sail Drive		
Prop Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Folding	<input type="checkbox"/> Feathering	<input type="checkbox"/> Fixed 2-blade	<input type="checkbox"/> Fixed 3-blade	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Rig	<input type="checkbox"/> Masthead	<input type="checkbox"/> Fractional	<input type="checkbox"/> Other			
Rudder	<input type="checkbox"/> Attached	<input type="checkbox"/> Skeg	<input type="checkbox"/> Spade	<input type="checkbox"/> Outboard		
Keel	<input type="checkbox"/> Full	<input type="checkbox"/> Fin	<input type="checkbox"/> Centerboard	<input type="checkbox"/> Wing	<input type="checkbox"/> Shoal	

Rig & Sails					
Mainsail		Largest Foresail		Spinnaker	
P (Hoist)		I (Luff)		SPL (Pole Length)	
E (Foot)		LP (Luff Perpen.)		SLE (Leech Len)	
MGL (1/4 Girth)				SLU (Luff Len)	
MGM (1/2 Girth)				SF (Foot)	
MGU (3/4 Girth)				SMG (Mid Girth)	
HB (Headboard)				SMW (Max Width)	

Modifications
Note any modifications from the original boat or deviations from class rules:

The applicant acknowledges that the data provided above is accurate. Handicaps will be determined using the USSailing Portsmouth Yardstick manual along with documented local adjustments. Races will be governed under USSailing Racing Rules of Sailing unless stated otherwise in a Notice of Race, Sailing Instruction, or Skipper's Meeting.

Owner/Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_