



An introduction to the new Pac52 Class

By Julie Servais

It's pretty exciting because on the West Coast we haven't really had any super high performance, one design race boats for quite a while. That's where the new Pac52 Class comes in. With a hull shape based on the current SuperSeries TP52 boats, but with a lighter engine, more stability and a taller mast supporting more sail area, the Pac52's are the pinnacle of high performance monohull racing in the United States. As well as being faster and more powerful, the Pac52's are also offshore capable boats, with some teams opting to participate in the Transpac race to Hawaii, as well as many other coastal and offshore races. The dual purpose capabilities of these boats gives the owners more value and makes the class more sustainable long term.

One of the most important resources to building a class and maintaining good competition is a solid set of class rules. Starting last year with the Owners meeting, held at St. Francis Yacht Club during Big Boat Series, the teams have been working together to build a rulebook that ensures the boats are even, that the competition is fair, and that the costs are controlled. This rulebook has turned into the Pacific 52 Class Association Bylaws and Rules version 5.0, which is the latest edition and is considered to be very close to final by all the teams. The one section we are still working on are the exact Box Rule parameters, which are being developed as the new boats arrive and the actual measurements are taken. While this section has been on hold pending the arrival of the new yachts, we have had discussions, conducted voting, and agreed on the rest of the rulebook which governs all other aspects of the racing. This article aims to explain the Class Rules, looking into each section as to its purpose, the nuances of the language, and the vision of the class racing structure. It is intended that you read this article side by side with the Class Rules.

Section 1 - Membership in the Pac52 Class

This first section discusses how to join the class and what makes for an eligible boat. We opted to create a "Pac52 Certificate", which is a document that gives specific data on a boat/team and which must be possessed in order to race with the class. In order to obtain a Pac52 Certificate a team must fit within the Pac52 Class Box Rule, must pay their class dues, and must have a valid ORR certificate confirming that they fit the Box Rule Parameters. This last part, using the ORR measurement and rating system to validate the boats' parameters, is a huge cost saving measure and also a way to ensure an unbiased, extremely detailed method for obtaining even performance between boats which come from different designers and are outfitted with differing equipment. Rather

than have our own measurers and a much more extensive box rule, we have agreed to have a 'Level Rating Rule' as well as a 'Box Rule'. This means that boats must comply by fitting within the Box Rule parameters and they also may not rate any faster than the agreed upon maximum ORR TCF number. We have also set a maximum upwind righting moment, which limits how stiff a boat can be. This part encourages the boats to not mode themselves into a 'fast upwind/slow downwind' configuration to get to the top mark first. The ORR rating limit uses the Windward/Leeward 60/40 VPP calculation which weighs the upwind performance heavier than the downwind performance, again deterring teams reducing downwind speed potential in trade for minute upwind gains.

Section 2 - Team Composition

The second section of the Rules discusses limitations on sailors within a team. Like most classes there is a limitation on pro sailors - for the Pac52 Class we have set this limit to 7, which is about half of the team. We utilize the World Sailing Classification System, and we do not have a means for contesting a classification - the WS decision is final. We also have an 'Owner-Driver Rule', which does allow each team to have up to three designated Alternate Helmsmen, but these Alternates must be approved by a vote among the teams. The intent is not to specifically ban professional sailors from driving, but rather to evaluate each alternate based on perceived ability and also their temperament as a driver. Essentially we want the owners driving their boats, and we specifically don't want any teams bringing in 'hot shot' drivers to try and gain an advantage. Alternate helmsmen are intended to be there to relieve the owners from time to time, to drive the boats at full potential, but to respect the other teams and give proper courtesy to the rules while racing.

The final bit of the Team Composition is the Crew Weight Limit. This is an interesting section because there is no set weight limit for the Class, but rather each team will decide their own crew weight limit and have to sail within that limitation. The reason for this is that the ORR VPP uses crew weight as part of the performance calculation of each boat. More crew weight typically makes your rating faster, it also adds to your Upwind Righting Moment which is limited. Since there are other factors affecting these outcomes, such as keel weight, beam, sail area, etc. we allow each team to determine their own crew weight limit. An example of this would be a boat that has a very heavy bulb and is very stiff upwind might have to declare a very light crew weigh limit in order to fit into the Box Rule. They can either sail this way with fewer crew, or they could choose to lighten their bulb to give them more room to take more crew on the rail. We will have weigh ins at the regattas to ensure that the teams are sailing within their self declared limitation.

Section 3 - Limitations on Sails

In order to keep costs reasonable we have set a limitation on how many new sails can be added to a team's racing inventory each year. To do this we have a 'Sail Card', which lists the sails that the team has measured in and is allowed to race with. Teams may have other sails not on the sail card (for example practice sails, or sails used for other

racing such as beer cans or offshore races), but they can only compete in Pac52 Class Races with sails on their Sail Card. The limitations allow more sails to be added during a team's first year in the class as they will need build up their base inventory. Subsequent years have tighter limitations.

Section 4 - Safety and Support Boats

The safety section is fairly straightforward and references "Pac52 Rules Exhibit C" which is the safety list of all mandatory requirements. This is based on the current US SER document, and is a hybrid of the Nearshore and Coastal categories. We worked with the teams to decide what safety gear made sense to require, and what could be left at the dock. Some items we didn't think were totally necessary for buoy racing, but are required by coastal races and are expensive to remove/reinstall regularly, so we kept them in our rules as requirements to limit how much 're-modding' teams would have to do between Pac52 Class events and local coastal races run by other organizations. An example of this is the masthead VHF antenna, which would have been an easy target to save weight in the rig for buoys, but would then need to be reinstalled any time the boat sails in a coastal race.

The limitation on support boats was probably the most heavily contested section of the rules. In its final wording it basically negates any advantage to having a support boat. This decision was not taken lightly, but the final consensus was that it was better for future development of the class to control costs in this area. Having a support boat, which can provide on-water coaching, carry extra sails to be swapped out between races as wind conditions change, and to carry extra equipment such as tools, lunches, drinks, etc. can become a major expense requiring a whole other set of logistical tools and basically its own team to run. Allowing this would essentially require it of all teams, as the potential weight savings would be significant enough to lend a huge advantage to any teams with this capability. So, the class rules prohibit contact with support boats from the preparatory signal of the first race of the day until the finish of the last race of the day. There is one exception and that is if a boat has a major breakdown or destroys a sail beyond use - in this case they can get tools/spares from their support boat. We agreed to allow this as it's a shame to see a boat have to retire for the day when the equipment to fix it is standing by and can be utilized. We also added a final part to the rule allowing the owners to temporarily waive the support boat restrictions for a single event if there is a unanimous agreement to do so. This is there so that if the teams end up having support boats anyway they can all agree to utilize them as long as no team is left out.

Section 5 - Race Schedule and Scoring

This section begins by discussing how the schedule is created. It then moves on to re-state that racing is on a boat for boat basis, with no time allowances given (even if one boat rates slower than another). The section then moves on to discuss the scoring method both for regattas and the season. We have chosen to reward consistency rather than risk taking. To do this we start by having all races scored, with no discards. We then go further, and in much the same manner as the Tp52 SuperSeries, in changing

the way ties are broken. Rather than breaking ties by rewarding the boat with a more inconsistent score (such as a few 1st and then a deep finish or two) as the standard Racing Rules of Sailing does, we base the tie-breaker entirely on the last race of a regatta, or for season scoring it is based on the last regatta of the season and then the last race of that regatta. This approach intensifies the competition during the last race of an event between boats with very tight scores. We have formatted the season championship scoring to count all races, rather than counting regatta finishing positions as many classes do. This makes every race count towards the year, so a boat will put full effort into racing, even in the final events of a regatta where the scores are separated enough to mean that the regatta finish positions won't change. All of this is aimed at making the racing as interesting and as intense as possible.

Section 6 - Class Administration

Section 6 is fairly basic and primarily lays out the format for teams to vote on matters that need to be decided.

Section 7 - Branding, Advertising and Sponsorships

This section ensures that professionally sponsored teams don't come in with a monetary advantage over the other teams. It also lays out an option for the Class itself to obtain corporate sponsorships to help defer costs by offering branding opportunities on the boats.

Section 8 - Official Pac52 Class Races and Unofficial Pac52 Class Races

We wanted to give the teams the option to organize "Unofficial Pac52 Class Races" with the thought that a number of the boats might all be doing the same coastal race that's not part of the class calendar, and wish to compete together. This section outlines the method of doing this, and also clarifies what an Official Pac52 Class Race is.

Section 9 - Practice days and blackout periods

Section 9 is another big cost saving section aimed at keeping the competition fair and reasonable. First, to make things more fun we outline having an Official Practice Day on the day before each regatta starts. On Official Practice Days we will have a race committee and be running practice races so all the teams can get warmed up against each other before the pressure of real racing is on.

We then get into the Blackout Day Window rule. There were a few versions of this rule which finally transformed into a limitation allowing the teams to only practice for 3 days out of the 7 days leading up to a regatta. The worry here was that we would see some teams show up a week or two before an event and sail every day for a long period of time, developing a significant advantage over the other teams who didn't put in the

same amount of effort. As we have seen this happen in many one design classes we all agreed to put some restrictions on this. Initially we wanted to “Black Out” Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before an event, however we realized that some teams may have out of town crew flying in, and practicing the weekend prior, then taking 3 days off, and then sailing again did not make sense for them. So we wrote the rule to allow the teams to choose what days they sail. Already we have seen some of the teams’ racing calendars and found that some of them plan to sail the weekend before a regatta and then do the practice day on Thursday, while other teams will simply sail Tuesday, Wednesday and the Thursday practice day. We feel this rule is very important to the sustainability of the class and keeping a broad base of teams that are able to compete.

Exhibit A - Pac52's & Owners

We are very excited to have four fully committed teams who have all built new boats to race in the inaugural year of the Class! We have additional potential teams in discussions with us and looking into joining the Class. During the writing of this article the Fox and Invisible Hand teams are both practicing and tuning getting ready for the season, and the Bad Pak and Rio teams have their yachts on ships coming from the boatbuilders and headed to San Diego for final commissioning in April!

Exhibit B – Official Pac52 Class Calendar – 2017

We have created a great schedule of five Regattas for the 2017 season. The racing starts in SoCal with Yachting Cup hosted by San Diego Yacht Club in May. The class then travels north to the Offshore One Design Championship at Newport Harbor Yacht Club, followed by Long Beach Race Week at Long Beach Yacht Club. There is then an intermission in the schedule to allow a couple of the teams to compete in the Transpac, while other teams spend the summer break with family and friends. Racing then heats up again in September for the two big regattas in San Francisco, the Big Boat Series followed two weekends later by the Pac52 Cup, both events hosted by St. Francis Yacht Club.

Summary

We are very excited for the inaugural year of the Pac52 Class. With the first four boats on their way and more potential teams in discussions with the Class we are putting all of our efforts into ensuring fair and even racing, great parties, great media coverage, and lots of fun and good camaraderie between the teams. If you would like to know more about the Pac52 Class you can get information from:

Pac52 Class Website: <http://www.pac52class.com>

Pac52 Class Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pac52racing/>

Pac52 Class Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/pac52class/>

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