

# Optimist Team Racing Umpiring A Practical Guide

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## Introduction

This guide is written for umpires at Optimist events. It includes guidance on how the sailor / umpire communication process works, so should be useful for sailors and coaches too, and applicable to non-Optimist events. It is a living document, and feedback to IODA (email [info@optiworld.org](mailto:info@optiworld.org)) will enable it to be updated to reflect any process improvements and tactical developments.

Optimist team racing can be fast and furious (and fun). The boats are highly manoeuvrable, the courses are short – between 6 and 10 minutes, and the two length zone is very small. Incidents can happen quickly, one after the other, and the young sailors can become very animated.

It is important that the sailor / umpire communication process is simple, and the umpires are able to respond promptly to any protest. It is therefore recommended, and this guide assumes, that the single flag protest procedure (rule D2.2) applies. It is also recommended that D1.1(d) is deleted, i.e. that arm signals are not required when hailing for room to tack.

This guide assumes two umpire boats per race, and two umpires per umpire boat. Two umpire boats is the ideal number; more than two causes over-crowding and with three there is uncertainty over which umpire boat should be making a call. Two umpires per boat is preferred as it enables both boats to be watched as an incident develops, and it helps consistency across the umpire team. It also allows the more experienced umpires to be paired with the less experienced. Guidance on umpiring with fewer resources is included in the relevant sections.

This guide is kept short. A fuller analysis can be found in the ISAF Team Racing Umpire Manual at [www.sailing.org/raceofficials/internationalumpire/document\\_library.php](http://www.sailing.org/raceofficials/internationalumpire/document_library.php).

## Basic Principles of Team Racing Umpiring

In team racing, as in umpired fleet racing, umpires act as an on-the-water protest committee, making on-the-water decisions on Part 2 protests from boats. Umpires do not act if the protest is not properly submitted, and they do not act if a boat acknowledges fault by taking a penalty turn.

Umpires do not take on duties that are the responsibility of race management. Whether to abandon a race, and the scoring of boats that are OCS or have sailed an incorrect course, are handled by race management in accordance with the rules including Appendix D.

There are minor exceptions and additions to these basic principles covered later in this document.

### ***The umpire process is as follows (see rule D2.2):***

1. At the first reasonable opportunity after an incident, a competitor hails "Protest" and displays a red protest flag.
2. The umpire gives time for a boat to acknowledge fault, sail clear and start taking a one-turn penalty.
3. If no boat does this, the umpire signals a decision: red flag and identification of boat for a penalty; green and white flag for "no boat is penalised".
4. A penalised boat shall sail clear as soon as possible and promptly take a two-turn penalty.

### **Notes on the above process:**

1. The hail of "Protest" should be loud enough to be heard by a correctly positioned umpire. IODA SIs typically require the flag to be attached to the sailor, displayed at arms length, and concealed after display. In such a case, wrist-attached flags do not comply as they cannot be concealed. The best arrangement is for the flag to be attached by elastic, and tucked inside the sailor's buoyancy aid / PFD when not displayed.

Unless there is good reason otherwise, the hail of "Protest" should be heard immediately after the incident. If no such hail is heard, the umpires should promptly decide "Incident closed". If a protest is later made in respect of the incident and no boat takes a penalty, the umpires should display a green-and-white flag.

2. A reasonable time for an umpire to give a boat to sail clear and start taking her penalty is 3 seconds. This may be increased in crowded situations, but in such cases a competitor intending to take a one-turn penalty is wise to reduce the chance of receiving a two-turn penalty from an umpire by raising a hand and saying "I'm turning" or words to that effect. If sailors are more experienced, or if incidents are following rapidly one after the other, umpires may find it appropriate to reduce the time to 2 seconds.

With regard to sailing "well clear" (see rule 44.2), boats should be encouraged to take the penalty in a reasonable place as soon as possible, and should not be penalised further if they need to interrupt a penalty to keep clear of other boats. However if a boat starts to take a penalty in a place that clearly will not be clear of other boats (e.g. on the start line 5 seconds before the start), she has not sailed "well clear".

3. If a boat takes a penalty following an incident, the umpire does not make any signal, even if he believes the other boat broke a rule. However there is an exception (see rule D2.2(d)) when in a single incident more than one boat breaks rule and is not exonerated (e.g. one boat breaks rule 11 and the other breaks rule 17). After such an incident an umpire should penalise any protested boat that broke a rule and did not take a penalty.
4. Umpire signals should be clear to all competitors and spectators. Whistles should be loud, and flags should be held overhead for about 2 seconds if possible. The clearest way to signal which boat is penalised is to hold the red flag vertically and point to the boat, hailing her number or country.

It can be advantageous for the non-driver to be holding both flags throughout the race, or in particular at busy times. This enables a signal to be made without delay and without losing eye-contact with the race.

In the event that more than one umpire boat signals a decision, and the decisions are not the same, both must be acted on. If one umpire boat penalises boat A, and another penalises boat B, then both A and B must take a two-turn penalty.

If an umpire in error signals a penalty against the wrong boat, this error cannot be undone. If he immediately realises his error he can immediately also penalise the other boat.

5. Any delay in sailing clear to take a penalty should be promptly penalised with a second (two-turn) penalty. To minimise the risk of error when judging whether a boat completes a two-turn penalty, the best technique is for an umpire to say "started on port" (or starboard) when a boat begins her penalty turn.

After displaying a red flag it is good practice for the umpires to confirm who (normally the non-driver) will watch to confirm that the penalised boat completes the penalty.

### **Other Specific Points**

#### ***Umpire-Initiated Penalties***

There are eight rule infringements that, when no penalty is taken, may be penalised by umpires without a protest from a boat. See rule D2.3. Unless otherwise stated, the penalty is two turns and is signalled using a red flag.

1. **Breaking Rule 42.**
2. **Touching a Mark.**
3. **Contact between Team-mates:** if neither boat takes a penalty, an umpire should penalise the boat that broke a rule.
4. **Gaining Advantage despite Taking a Penalty.** Following a valid protest, an umpire may give additional turns to a boat that has broken a rule and gained an advantage despite taking a penalty. An advantage is gained if the infringing boat is not behind the other boat at the conclusion of the penalty. The additional turns should result in the penalised boat being the distance of the penalty behind the other boat. However when it is the team that gains an advantage, and additional turns cannot correct this (e.g. when the infringing boat is in 8<sup>th</sup> place but the effect of the infringement is to secure a safe 2,3,4 for her team-mates), the umpire should fly a black and white flag so that the jury can consider the incident after the race and if appropriate adjust the team's score under rule D3.1(d)(2).
5. **Rule 14 when there is Damage or Injury.** The Race Committee is normally responsible for any financial consequences of damage with supplied boats. If an umpire believes an additional scoring penalty may also be appropriate, a black and white flag should be flown to indicate there may be a hearing and penalty under rule D3.1(d)(3) after the race.
6. **Clearly Indicating an Intention to Take a Penalty, then Not Doing So.** An umpire should penalise if he believes that the boat did break a rule, and this clear indication caused the other boat not to protest.
7. **Incomplete or Delayed Penalty Turn.** If an umpire-given two-turn penalty is incomplete or delayed, then the boat has not exonerated herself in accordance with D2.2(b), and she should be given an additional two-turn penalty. If a voluntary one-turn penalty is incomplete, an umpire only penalises when there has been a valid protest (hail and red flag), and then penalises the boat(s), if any, that the umpire decides has broken a rule. This may not be the boat that made the incomplete penalty turn.
8. **Sportsmanship:** an umpire may either give a two-turn penalty, or display a black and white flag (see below), or both.

### **Black & White Flag**

This is flown by umpires to indicate there may be a hearing after the race, which may then result in a boat's or team's score being adjusted. The boat in question should continue racing. The reason to fly a black and white flag can be:

- breach of sportsmanship that the umpire wishes to address in a hearing;
- a team gaining an advantage despite a boat taking a penalty, where the advantage cannot be removed by giving the boat that broke a rule additional penalty turns;
- a reckless breach of rule 14 that an umpire believes has caused damage or injury.

After the race the CHUMP then decides whether to proceed with a hearing. If it is to be held ashore later, the umpire should write a brief report as soon as possible after the incident, recording, in the case of gaining advantage, the positions of all boats at the time.

Rule D3.1(d) gives two options for penalising after such a hearing. D3.1(d)(2) is appropriate for gaining advantage, as it can reverse the result of the race. D3.1(d)(3) is appropriate for sportsmanship or breaches of rule 14 as it penalises the team's overall position in the competition irrespective of the result of the race (which the team may have lost anyway).

### **Sailing an Incorrect Course**

If a boat breaks rule 28.1 (Sailing the Course), the Race Committee should score her an extra 6 points in addition to her finishing score (rule D3.1(d)(1)) after a hearing if required (see rule A5). Umpires should not fly any flags, but should inform the Race Committee of the relevant facts.

### ***Penalty Turns at the Finishing Line***

A boat taking a penalty turn(s) at the finishing line must complete the turn(s) then cross (or re-cross) the line. If a boat crosses the line on two occasions, once before the turn(s) and once after, an umpire should advise the finishing boat which crossing is to be scored.

If a boat starts her penalty with a gybe, she completes the penalty when she reaches a close-hauled course after a tack. This can be close in time to when she re-crosses the finishing line, and ideally the umpire is positioned on the extension of the finishing line so that he can judge whether the penalty is complete before the boat re-crosses the line. Team Racing Call K.1 refers.

### ***Rule 42***

The following are “tactical” breaches of rule 42.1 that are more likely in Optimist team racing than fleet racing:

- single rock at the start that propels the boat;
- multiple tacks or gybes in quick succession for tactical reasons that cause a boat to make faster progress than boats that are not tacking or gybing;
- a “VMG tack”: two roll tacks, one immediately following the other, when the boat turns less than 90 degrees on each tack. The boat does not complete the first tack, so the exception in rule 42.3(b) does not apply, and she breaks 42.2(b)(1). The boat is also likely to gain an advantage as the acceleration out of the tack will be in a direction closer to head to wind than if the tack had been completed, in which case she also breaks rule 42.1;
- a single gybe that enables a boat to establish or break an overlap approaching mark 3;
- sculling to turn at a mark after slowing to execute a mark trap.

### ***Damage & Breakdowns (when boats are supplied)***

If boats are supplied, the umpires have a responsibility to identify sailor responsibility in the case of damage. Following contact likely to cause damage, an umpire should note which boat(s) he believes were to blame for the incident, and then after the finish inspect the boats for damage.

When a boat displays a red flag to claim a score change for a breakdown, an umpire should note the position of all boats at the time, and the impact on performance of the breakdown. This information will assist the Race Committee when making its decision.

### ***Race CHUMP***

For each race it is good practice to identify a “Race CHUMP”. While this does not change the responsibilities of other umpires, the Race CHUMP should be the point of contact for the Race Committee, and should assume the lead responsibility for quality of umpiring and fairness of competition. See “position 10” below for further comments.

### **Umpires’ Route Round the Course & Boat Allocation**

Umpires should cover zones and adopt a standard route around the course as this makes it likely the umpire boats, acting as a pair, are most likely to be covering the whole fleet and in the optimal position to see incidents. This is shown in the diagram and discussed in the following paragraphs.

The umpire team should have a standard agreement for which umpire boat starts on the right and which on the left, and maintain this for the day. Changing arrangements during the day can cause mistakes in positioning and therefore increases the risk of incorrect decisions.

Each of the two driving umpires should call the two boats of the lower numbered or lettered team that are closer to his umpire boat. The non-driving umpire calls the other team’s boats as they engage with the driver’s two boats. This ensures all incidents are covered, and minimises the risk of both umpire boats calling the same incident.

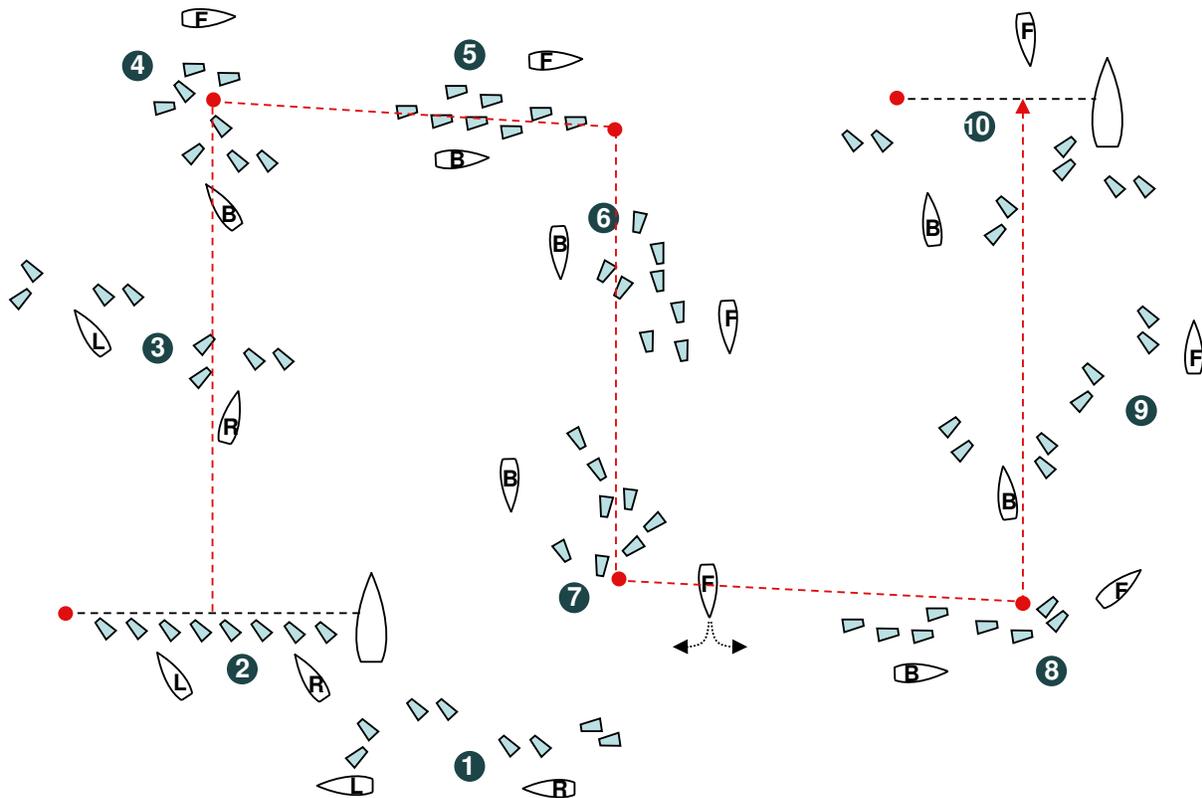
Exception: if one umpire boat needs to watch two separate pairs of boats that are not in the same field of view, it is better for one umpire to watch one pair and the other to watch the other.

If there is only one umpire boat on the race, it is normally better to drive the front position, and then to adjust position to be close to any race-deciding incidents.

### General Tips on Driving

1. Best is at all times to be moving round the course level with and at the same speed as the sailors, including when penalising or watching a penalty turn. Acceleration will be necessary if turning at a mark outside the fleet, deceleration if on the inside.
2. On an upwind leg, the more an umpire can drive in a head-to-wind direction, the better. It reduces wash, it often optimises the position when watching two pairs, and the boats tend anyway, after a while, to tack back towards the umpire boat.
3. When stationary, ensure the umpire boat is pointing in the direction of the next movement.
4. When turning 180 degrees, turn away from the fleet.
5. When umpiring "front" and "back" (positions 4 onwards), the front umpire should normally look to align himself with the gap between boats 2 and 3, and the back umpire with the gap between 5 and 6. These positions should be adjusted to reflect where the pressure points are, and the need to call accurately zone entry and overlaps.
6. Umpiring is a lot easier if close to the boats being watched. One to two lengths away is a good distance. The suggested route around the course also minimises the risk of interfering with competitors while being this close.

### UMPIRES' ROUTE ROUND THE COURSE (4 boats per team)



### **Position 1: Pre-start**

Maintain a relatively static position rather than to “chase the action”. Assuming the fleet bunches to the right of the start boat, the right hand umpire should align himself with the pair 2<sup>nd</sup> most right, and the left hand umpire with or to the left of the left hand most pair. If a pair separates from the rest of the fleet, it is usually better to watch that pair from these static positions.

As pairs are reaching in towards the line, it is advantageous to be to leeward of the first (left hand most) boat of the pair, (i) to judge the overlap and (ii) to be in the right position to see the gap between the boats when the boats luff to head-to-wind.

### **Position 2: The Start**

Maintain left and right positions and move off with the fleet. Beware boats returning or taking penalty turns.

### **Position 3: First Beat**

Maintain left and right. If judging port crossing starboard, avoid being line-astern of either boat, as in this position the umpire cannot judge whether the starboard boat needs to bear away. Better is to move to between the boats on the line that is at an angle of 45 degrees to each boat’s course.

About ¾ way up first beat, or when the leading pair tack on the lay-line, whichever is earlier, the left umpire moves outside and level with the leading pair, and then moves ahead of them to get into position to windward of the first mark as the first boat enters the zone.

### **Position 4: At Mark 1**

Front umpire is 3 - 4 lengths dead to windward of mark 1, and the back umpire moves to the centre and approaches the mark to leeward of the last boats. This position directly to leeward of the mark helps judge incidents and gaps between boats at the mark. Incidents frequently happen when boats luff to near head-to-wind at the mark.

The front umpire moves off when the first 4 or 5 boats have rounded the mark, and moves quickly to re-attach himself to the front of the fleet in a windward position.

The back umpire moves off to leeward of the boats in 6<sup>th</sup> / 7<sup>th</sup> position.

### **Position 5: Approaching Mark 2**

The front umpire needs to be alert to luffing, but is in an ideal position to judge such manoeuvres as he can see the gap between the boats if they luff towards him (he should accelerate if in the path of luffing boats). He judges zone entry for the first half of the fleet, and then continues round the mark. It is highly likely that the first few boats will continue on port after the mark.

The back umpire judges zone entry for the second half of the fleet. He stay close to leeward of the boats and stops when 2 lengths from the mark. It is likely that boats of the leading team try to execute mark traps and luffs, and boats of the losing team may gybe sharply at the mark.

*However, if instead of the “S” course, mark 3 is to starboard, then the front umpire should stay at mark 2 and judge the rounding for all eight boats, allowing the back umpire to “over-take” and become front-right down the run, with the previously front umpire becoming back-left.*

### **Position 6: Down the Run**

Maintain front-left and back-right positions (*or front-right and back-left if mark 3 to starboard*). The front pair can be expected to stay left with an “S” course.

From now on, the race will start to become more hectic, and good boat positioning and fast responses to decisions become essential. It is good practice for the second umpire in each boat to have both flags in his hand, or right next to him – e.g. secured to the driving console by a length of shock-cord, so that he does not lose time or eye contact by having to look down to pick one up.

### **Position 7: At Mark 3**

The critical requirement is for front umpire to judge the first boat’s entry into the zone, and then cross leg 4 as the first boat approaches mark 3. This simple move takes most of the difficulty out of calling this mark.

If the first boat is stopping at the mark, the umpire then turns right, towards the mark, and takes up a stationary position to leeward of the mark to watch the manoeuvres. If the first boat is continuing around the mark, the umpire turns left towards mark 4 and as he does this he will find the first boat is now to windward of him on leg 4.

The back umpire calls the back half of the fleet into the zone from a position about four lengths from mark 3, and, assuming the fleet is manoeuvring at the mark, remains in this position. The two umpires are then in a very good position to call the mark. It is important for the umpires to call which boats have to give mark room as each boat enters the zone, and to be in a good position to judge whether those boats which have mark room and are still on leg 3 leave the zone when luffing on starboard away from the mark.

#### ***Position 8: At Mark 4***

On leg 4, both umpire boats stay to leeward of the fleet. The front umpire judges zone entry for the leading boats, and either remains in this position or then gets ahead of the fleet (as shown in the diagram) to judge the rounding. It is important to be able to see the gap between the boats as they luff round the mark, and this is only possible from ahead or behind. The drawback with being behind the leading boats as they round the mark is that, if the fleet is close, this is likely to be where the back umpire needs to be to judge the zone entry and mark rounding of the back half of the fleet.

#### ***Position 9: On Leg 5***

After the mark, the back umpire does not round the mark but heads for the port side of the course. The right / front umpire stays level with the boat in 2<sup>nd</sup> place, and the left / back umpire with the boat in 6<sup>th</sup> place.

If the fleet is well spread, the umpires continue front and back rather than left and right. However, if the fleet is bunched, there is likely to be lots of place-changing on the leg, and it can be simpler, and create less wash, if umpires stay left and right and umpire the two pairs closest to them.

#### ***Position 10: The Finish***

The front umpire should aim to be above the finish line when the first boat finishes, holding position facing the fleet using reverse engine. The back umpire is as close to the back of the fleet as possible, preferably towards the left hand side as on this side incidents are more likely and will happen on either tack, whereas the starboard boats can be best judged by the front umpire.

As boats finish both umpires are in good position to continue watching the remainder of the fleet.

After the finish, both umpire boats should briefly remain to answer any questions from competitors, and to advise the finishing boat on scoring any turns on the finishing line, but should not stay so long that it holds up the next race start. The race CHUMP should also check the finishing boat crew have no questions for the umpires – a “thumbs-up” signal is an efficient way of doing this – and to confirm if any boats have been seen to have broken rule 28.1 (Sailing the Course).

### **Specific Team Racing Rules & Optimist Situations**

Appendix D amends or adds the following rules:

- D1.1(a): the zone at a mark is a two-length zone
- D1.1(b) amends 18.2(b) to enable boats on starboard at mark 1 to set a mark trap for the fleet. The standard (fleet-racing) 18.2(b) gives a leading starboard-tack boat A mark-room over all other starboard-tack boats, but not over a boat X that is on port tack at the time A enters the zone – in such a case it is 18.2(a) that later determines mark-room between A and X. This is not a problem in fleet racing as A is unlikely to stop at the mark.

However in team racing A is quite likely to stop and set a mark trap. D1.1(b) therefore amends 18.2(b) so that if X is on port when A on starboard enters the zone, and that later A becomes clear ahead when X tacks, then X has to give A mark-room.

- D1.1(c) deletes rule 18.4. There is no requirement for a boat entitled to luff under rule 17 to gybe at a gybe-mark.
- D1.1(d) optionally introduces arm signals into rule 20, but it is recommended this rule is only retained for team racing in large keel-boats.
- D1.1(e) prohibits a boat that has finished from interfering with a boat that has not finished. Boats are required to sail away from the finishing line to minimise interference.
- D1.1(g) clarifies that team mates can provide assistance; there is no restriction on team mates who have finished hailing oral assistance to those still racing.
- Rule 61.1(a) is amended so that a protest flag is required, but it only needs to be displayed at the time of the incident.

The following specific situations can occur and need attention:

1. Before the start, establishing a leeward overlap from astern so close to the windward boat that the windward boat is never able to keep clear, and later there being contact. The leeward boat breaks rule 15.
2. The alternative to 1, where the windward boat does initially have room to keep clear by sheeting in and crossing the start line early, but chooses not to, and thereafter the boats come together. The windward boat breaks rule 11.
3. A heading windshift, while boats are overlapped close to head-to-wind before the start, causing boats to pass through head-to-wind and become subject to rule 13 without changing course. This is common in Optimists and switches which boat has right-of-way.
4. The “VMG tack” (see rule 42 section) when a boat does two “tacks”, one immediately after the other, but does not reach a close-hauled course after the first “tack”. This move breaks 42.1 and 42.2(b). It can be used to establish a better position on the starting line, to secure a controlling leeward position up leg 1 or leg 5, or to overtake close to the finish.
5. Single tacks or gybes that break rule 42 especially at the start, when tacking to leeward of another boat, or when gybing and trying to break an overlap approaching mark 3.
6. Starboard boats changing course at mark 1 onto a collision course with a port tack boat that is passing the mark. The starboard boat will then bear away and protest, when in fact if she had not borne away she would have broken rule 16.1.
7. Boats on a other leg of the course may not interfere except when sailing their proper course (rule 24.2). This can happen after mark 4, when the leading boat sails a starboard-tack reach after rounding the mark and interferes with the boats on port reaching to the mark. It can also occur at mark 1, when a boat at the back of the fleet is close-hauled on starboard tack above the lay-line to mark 1 and interferes with a leading boat on leg 2. However the rule is not broken by a boat that departs from a proper course to be in a position to interfere, and then returns to a proper course before interfering.