



**ROYAL WESTERN**  
YACHT CLUB OF ENGLAND



## INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You've just decided to be an Observer for a Predicted Log Challenge. Well, that sounds interesting, but where do you start? What do you do? Rulebooks can be dull, and they may not tell you everything you need to know at the time you need to know it. So, read on, since I've tried to jot down some things to help you get started and to keep you going.

First it would be prudent to explain what a Predicted Log Challenge is all about. Let's see if I can explain it in five sentences or less...

1. Skipper runs a measured mile many times to determine how many seconds it takes to go one mile at a particular engine RPM setting.
2. The Challenge course is published and Skipper determines the distance and course to steer between each turning mark allowing for tidal streams and weather at the time of the Challenge.
3. Skipper uses his distances and seconds per mile data to predict the time to complete the Course.
4. Skipper fills out the Entry Form with his predictions and returns it to the Challenge Committee.
5. All Skippers run the Challenge, and the one who comes closest to his predictions is declared the winner.

Once the Challenge starts, the Skipper is not allowed to see a watch... he's completely on his own. And that, my friend, is where you come in. It is the Observer who has possession of all time-telling devices, and has the duty of recording the time at the Start & Finish. Oh such power! Of course, you don't know what the Skipper's predictions were, so you can't really be of any help. But it can be entertaining watching the expressions of anxiety that cross your Skipper's face when all the other boats go roaring past, or the expression of total panic when you go roaring past everyone else! You can just sit there with a smug look on your face, clutching the timepiece tightly, and enjoying the all-powerful feeling that suddenly comes over you. But, don't gloat too long... you have a job to do, and it's time that we start getting down to the basics.

## THE PLAYERS

This short section will give you some idea of what each person is expected to do.

**Skipper** - This is the person who is generally considered to be the "brains of the outfit." He is probably the one who has determined the speed at which the boat will be helmed, he has charted the course and figured the distances for each leg, and he has calculated the Predicted Time for the Entry Form which was returned to the Committee before the Challenge began. The Skipper has overall responsibility for the safety of the vessel and its passengers, and for the sportsmanlike conduct which must be displayed during a Challenge. He is well versed in the Rules of the Road, and he is a competent boat handler. It should be noted here that the Skipper is not always the person at the helm; that task is occasionally delegated to a crew member so that the Skipper is free to take bearings, check wind and current, and plan strategy based upon changes in these variables.

Whether at the helm or not, it is generally the Skipper who will call the line at the Start & Finish, it is always wise to ask who will be calling the line, how the line will be called, and how much warning you will be given.

**Crew Member**- The person designated as crew must also be a competent boat handler, and must be able to take over for the Skipper if necessary. The responsibilities assigned to a crew member vary widely from boat to boat. Some crew members have the helm during a Challenge, while others act as gophers for the tea and sandwiches!

# 'MOTOR YACHT' PREDICTED LOG CHALLENGE-OBSERVER INSTRUCTIONS

**Observer** - The Observer is an official member of the Challenge Committee. He is assigned to a contestant's vessel for the purpose of ensuring that all Sailing Instructions & Rules are followed and to record the pertinent data during a Challenge. The Observer is the only person who is allowed access to a timepiece. It is the Observer's responsibility to maintain custody of both the official timings and to turn these in to the Organising Committee once the Challenge has been completed.

During a Challenge, it is the Observer's responsibility to record Start & Finish times, and at each mark, the side on which the mark was taken, and the approximate distance from the mark. It is also the Observer's responsibility to record any information regarding a Skipper's failure to follow the Rules of the Road. Your Skipper may also request that you record information about other boats during a Challenge. Write the facts down immediately, and with as much detail as possible; you may be asked about such events later on. Just remember, as an Observer you are an official member of the Challenge Committee, and you have some very critical duties to perform.

When you arrive at your Skipper's boat, remember that you are a guest and there are certain unwritten rules which should be followed. Never wear hard soled shoes; you'll really be off to a bad start if you mark your Skipper's decks or slip overboard because of no traction! Wear appropriate clothing... you may be assigned to a boat with an open bridge where you'll really feel the wind. Be sure to ask the location of the life jackets, fire extinguishers, and first aid kit, and have someone show you how to use "the head." These are common sense things that those of you who are sailors should already know, but not all Observers are boaters... yet.

When you arrive at your Skipper's boat, it is best to be prepared. You should carry a clipboard, scratch paper, pen, and, of course, a timepiece capable of recording seconds. You may need masking tape and scrap sheets of paper to cover instruments. You should have a copy of the Sailing Instructions (and be very familiar with them!), and some kind of worksheet. Just list the turning marks, and make columns for the side on which the mark was passed and the distance. The purpose of the worksheet is to give you more room to write and log events.

You also have another important duty to be done before the Start... you must ensure that all time telling devices are covered or put somewhere so that no one will have access to them. You should also make sure that any clocks which have chimes are not only covered, but have been muffled or turned off so that the chimes are inoperable. Your Skipper is allowed access to a time-telling device only until he starts so you must make certain that all watches are collected either prior to or immediately after the start. This includes any stop watches, etc. which may have been used when running the measured mile. Since you will have things to record immediately at the start, it is wise to collect as many of the timepieces as possible before the Challenge.

Additionally all electronic devices that might indicate time must be turned off or hidden from view. An electronic depth sounder and an Auto helm is allowed.

Before the Start would be a good time for you to ask who will be calling the Start & Finish lines, and how the call will be given. The Skipper should give the Observer some warning by saying, "Get ready to mark" followed by "Stand by to mark" followed by "Mark!" However, there is no set procedure, so ask your Skipper.

## **DURING THE CHALLENGE**

Your Skipper has just said MARK, and you've written down the actual Start time. . You've now also taken custody of all watches, ensured that all other time-telling devices are covered, and you have the official watch to use during the event. Okay...then you are on your way.

You should be familiar with the Sailing Instructions, so you should always know what the next mark is. Many Observers have asked whether they can help their Skippers locate marks; this is permissible, but only if your Skipper wants you to. You won't have a lot of duties to perform between each mark, but there are certain things you should notice.

The Skipper is not allowed to make turns or other abnormal movements to slow him down. He is also not

## **'MOTOR YACHT' PREDICTED LOG CHALLENGE-OBSERVER INSTRUCTIONS**

allowed to stop, with only a few exceptions, and if any of these situations occur, be sure to note the actual time. A Skipper may stop in the case of a mechanical failure, or for something like a "weed stop" where he is trying to free the propellers.

The vessel should not alter his speed. If an emergency occurs, and your Skipper goes to the aid of another vessel, that is allowable. Just be sure that you note the time lost and all events which may be pertinent. If the Skipper can continue the Challenge following one of these events, also be sure to note the time he restarts. It should be noted that if at any time during a Challenge the Skipper determines that he must break the rules for the purposes of safety, he is free to do so. This is called "invoking the safety rule." If this occurs, note the time lost and all information pertinent to the situation. Write down what caused him to invoke the safety rule, and state conditions as you see them. Make good notes; a committee will look at what occurred & why.

The Observer is to write down the side on which a mark is actually passed, as well as the approximate distance from the mark. Sailing Instructions specify on which side a mark is to be passed... that is, the mark is to the port or to the starboard. For you non-sailors, port is left (both have four letters) and starboard is right. As for distance, if you're not a very good judge, your Skipper should be, so ask him. If only one distance is listed for a mark, that is the maximum allowed.

### **AFTER THE CHALLENGE**

Your Skipper has just called mark at the finish, and his next words are probably, "What time is it?" Unless stated otherwise in the instructions, you can go ahead and tell him. Also, you can return all watches that you carefully put away before the Start.

Usually after the call of mark at the finish, the Skipper asks to see his actual times at the Start & Finish. Again, unless specified otherwise by the Sailing Instructions, you can show your Skipper his actual times. He will probably start calculating his own score at this point, and that means that lunch can be either an exhilarating experience or an absolute drag... depending upon how the calculations turned out.

Although the Challenge is over, you still have some duties to perform. You have been recording all of your times, distances, speeds, and remarks on a worksheet during the event. You should now transfer key information onto the official Completion Form. Be sure to record all of the following:

- Actual Start time
- the number of Sailing Instruction or Rule Infringements
- any remarks which you feel should be noted, as well as any comments which your Skipper asked you to write.
- Actual Finish time.

Also, you must remember to sign the Completion Form. Your Skipper will probably look at what you have written on the Completion Form, and then he also has to sign the Form on the side where the times are recorded.

Completion Forms always state where and when they are to be turned in. You should phone or ask the Skipper to VHF radio call the Results in if possible to save time for the Committee to calculate the Results.

There is usually a prize giving of some kind after a Challenge. Before the actual presentation there is some time for mixing with the other contestants and Observers. It can be interesting to see how many people think they won the Challenge with the smallest error. But then comes the moment of truth... the actual scores are revealed, and the real winners are awarded the prizes. You should participate in these events; they are fun, and it is a good way to get to know the other people who are involved in the same sport as you are. You've made it through your first Challenge, and you are now an experienced member of the RWYC Observer Corps.

Congratulations!