

SYRA Autumn Newsletter

The Starting Line Delivering for the Yacht Owner

As we approach the winter sailing season, delivering for the yacht owner is a topic worthy of discussion. Given the mission of the SYRA and the fact that this is no doubt a top priority for everyone involved in the program, I offer a few thoughts.

In superyacht racing there are many individuals who are involved in making the regatta experience one that the owner and his or her guests would want to continue into the future. Yacht captains, permanent crew, racing afterguard members, regatta organizers and indirectly, the SYRA all play important roles.

Delivering for the owner in superyacht racing is a bit more complex than it is in the 'conventional' sailing arena. For those aboard the yacht, truly understanding what is important to the owner is critical. While winning is often the primary driver in conventional racing, surprisingly it is not the top priority for many superyacht programs. It has been said that in some ways this is "the entertainment business". Most superyacht owners are very competitive of course - a trait that is no doubt instrumental in their personal and business successes. This does not, however, necessarily translate into a 'must win' scenario to achieve a satisfactory regatta experience.

It is important for captains and racing afterguard members to manage podium expectations. Given how long it takes to get any superyacht racing to its full potential, this is especially important for the owner's first few regattas or with a new yacht.

Organizers need to do their part in ensuring the event regatta is more than a sailboat race. The social side of the event, with special parties and unique features such as a yacht open house, can result in a memorable experience for the owners, their families and guests... win or lose.

The organizer's race committee should endeavor to provide interesting, proper length courses for the disparate fleet of yachts. Ensuring there is an appropriate mix of reaching, running and beating enables the rating rule VPP to work as designed. And then there is the important responsibility of assigning logical class breaks to ensure that there is meaningful competition for all entrants despite the myriad of different factors that establish sailing characteristics.

Stating the obvious, it is essential for the yachts' afterguards to sail by the rules and make safe racing a higher priority than competitive advantage. There isn't an owner in fleet who would consider a regatta a great experience if there is contact or even a near collision.

The SYRA, now in its 8th year, must remain committed to its stated mission, "...to enhance the enjoyment of super yacht owners by pursuing all possible measures to ensure safe and fair racing along with meaningful competition....".

There is so much more to this complex subject matter, but the bottom line is that it really is all about the yacht owner and we need to keep that in focus!

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