

US Offshore Report 11/19/15

Dear US Sailing Board,

Attached are two documents which pertain to our initiative with EPHRF (Enhanced PHRF). Please read "EPHRF Summary" first followed by the second document entitled "Further Explanation for EPHRF."

These two documents should help provide a better understanding of the project that the Offshore Staff has been working on for the past several months.

George Hinman
Chair Offshore Committee

To be presented by Chuck Hawley

To the US Offshore Committee – Nov. 9th, 2015
Submitted by George Hinman – 11/19 BoD Call

EPHRF

EPHRF is not replacing PHRF, it's enhancing it. It will do so in four ways, none of which is more significant than the other. The strength of EPHRF, therefore, depends on the adaption of all four factors. They are,

- 1) Creating National Reference Ratings (NRR) for (ultimately) all PHRF boats. We start with and are heavily influenced by the current PHRF base boat rating. (We estimate that at least 30% and perhaps 50% of the current PHRF rating deltas will not change). We then determine the time deltas using US Sailing's latest (2015) VPP. For those PHRF boats where the current PHRF and VPP deltas are significantly different, a national EPHRF committee, headed by Bruce Bingman and including Dan, will review the deltas of the deltas and then decide on the NRR.
- 2) Changing the EPHRF racing from ToD (which not all, but the majority of PHRF fleets use) to ToT. Experience shows that ToT both compresses the corrected times and more fairly accounts for changing wind conditions during the race.
- 3) Setting up scaled corrections, with help from our VPP and the EPHRF Committee, for all factors that could affect base NRR's. Examples are spinnaker vs. non-spinnaker, folding vs. fixed prop, A vs. S-sail and sprit vs. no sprit.
- 4) The creation of two NRR's for each boat. One would be a single number (calculated as per above at 10-12 TWS) used for windward/leeward racing, while the other would be a single number used for "round the buoys" racing, where reaching is the predominant point of sail. This reflects the fact that rating deltas do change significantly from one type of racing to the other.

Since all of you will be asked, we suggest making clear that all four factors are important and, most significantly, we make no attempt to replace PHRF. Furthermore, we believe that, once exposed to a more fair rating environment, some PHRF owners and/or OA's would consider moving up to much more robust rules like TN+, ORR and IRC. (I don't mention ORC only because it's not prevalent in NA at this time).

When asked why USO believes EPHRF will be successfully accepted, the best answer is this. By having the national authority, as opposed to local influences, create the NRR's through the introduction of some science and by having a universal, consistent and non-partisan methodology creating the NRR's, both the perception and reality of fairness will be enhanced. With this enhancement (hence the name "Enhanced" PHRF), we believe more owners will be attracted to what they see as a more level and fair playing field. (It should also be noted that, we expect this transition to take many years).

Aside from not wanting any change, the most likely and thoughtful objection would be this. In transitioning from PHRF to EPHRF, the potential of having PHRF ratings reflect sailing ability, boat prep and sails, as opposed to the speed potential of the boat itself, will be much mitigated, if not eliminated. Yet, there are and will be some fleets that don't want that. In fact, what they want is a "golf handicapping" system where one's rating is a direct reflection of one's ability/boat prep/etc. The latter would be based on elapsed times only and could ultimately be administered by US Offshore, once the SAP software is fully operational.

Further Explanation for the EPHRF Initiative – Nov. 2015 Submitted by George Hinman – 11-19 BoD Call

The purpose of this document is to provide more color and understanding of our thought process behind this initiative. By reading this, it's hope that some or all of the potential objections/fears that one might have with EPHRF will be mitigated. However, it's imperative that the document preceding this, which explains the basics of EPHRF is read first.

The idea of NRR's is not new. It's been bandied about for years with PHRF experts like Dan and Bruce Bingman. However, given the lack of encouragement for any sort of leadership from US Offshore and the false narrative that US Offshore was creating substantial losses each year, there was no appetite to do anything about it.

In the meantime, the amount of complaints from sailors to the US Offshore office about the "unfairness" of PHRF continue to rise, coupled with anecdotal information concerning the precipitous drop in PHRF participation. When Dan first broached the subject with me, I thought it was an excellent idea. We (all four of the Offshore office personnel and I) have worked on this very hard, with the guts of the concept coming from Dan, who clearly had thought long and hard about it.

From the beginning, even though it took some time to determine the details (some of which purposely remain loose), we agreed on some basic principals. They were,

- 1) Our goal was to improve PHRF racing through both the perception and reality of a relatively more accurate and fair rule.
- 2) Our goal was **not** to replace PHRF with a "new" rule. We only wanted to enhance it.
- 3) Our goal was to maintain PHRF's best (some say only) attribute – simplicity. It's why we resisted using more than one number (one rated wind speed) for each of the two types of racing. (TN+ and ORC Club use three – light medium and heavy, while the other rules use multiple wind speeds. For that reason, all those rules will be much more "accurate" than EPHRF could ever be).
- 4) Our goal was to come with a four-part plan. ToT, for example, is just as important to EPHRF's success as is modifying the PHRF deltas with our VPP.
- 5) Our goal was to "Nationalize" PHRF ratings through the use of the NRR's and standard adjustments. Even though we know local PHRF handicappers will react negatively to this through their loss of control, we also know it's critical to the success of EPHRF that it be seen as originating from a "National Authority" like US Sailing/Offshore.

As a summary, here are some possible and raised objections to EPHRF with answers.

Objection: By issuing EPHRF certs, US Offshore will be in competition with any or all of the other rule owners.

Answer: First, even though PHRF is a local administered rule, US Offshore, as much as any organization, manages PHRF. A quick look at our web site makes this clear. [US Offshore PHRF](#) . PHRF participation is declining and it's our obligation to do something about it. No one else will. Creating an "EPHRF Certificate" is a detail and an administrative task that more or fleets are less well equipped to handle. Most importantly, having the cert originate from US Offshore makes it clear that the local influence is gone, that a non-partisan and objective national authority is now supplying PHRF certs, called EPHRF.

Last, EPHRF is a philosophical change to most PHRF fleets; that is, despite what our web site states, many PHRF ratings attempt to rate sailing ability. It's the dirty little not so secret of PHRF. EPHRF brings some science and complete neutrality to PHRF racing, which is a perfect segue for a PHRF fleet or a regatta OA to switch to one of the much more accurate rules that exist today. One could say EPHRF is a means to an end, that end being all racing in America under one as accurate as possible rule.

Objection: It will be confusing to PHRF sailors to have another PHRF rule

Answer: Indeed, there will be some confusion by sailors if a fleet or regatta uses the enhancements from EPHRF. ToT is a significant change in itself. And, it's likely in the beginning that some PHRF sailors would own a local PHRF certificate and an EPHRF cert to attend, for example, CRW. However, once a fleet or regatta converts and sailors becomes used to the changes, the confusion will end. Plus, having a single number, albeit a different looking number because of ToT, for each type of racing allows for an easy transition for PHRF sailors.

Objection: By bringing out EPHRF, US Offshore becomes a competitor to the very rule owners it's obligated to serve. Furthermore, by pushing EPHRF, US Offshore will be distracted from it's primary reason for being, issuing certs for those main rules.

Answer: EPHRF will be far below all the other rules in terms of accuracy and therefore is not competition. The main reason for this is its primary handicap, that it's a single number rule. (See above why). Attempting to determine speed deltas among boats using our methodology for EPHRF at one wind speed is reasonably accurate. The accent is on "reasonably". However, we all know that those deltas can radically change through light to heavy wind conditions. A quick look at two ORR certs will make this clear. So, when a fleet like S.F. complains that EPHRF, determined at 10 TWS will not work for them at 18 TWS, they are correct. It won't. They either have to do what they do today, which is to empirically judge speeds at 18 TWS, or shift to a rule like ORR or IRC.

Some might argue that TN+ or ORC Club, neither of which has a foothold in America at this point, are closer to EPHRF. That's a very misleading statement. With the light/medium/heavy wind speeds and, thus, three different ratings for W/L, those rules are much closer to their mother rule than to EPHRF.

As for focus, I can promise you that our primary focus remains on serving the clients with the three main rules. EPHRF will not get in the way. Besides, it will be a long slow grind to convince fleet-by-fleet, regatta-by-regatta to change to EPHRF. At most, we see 100-200 (out of about 5,100) base ratings ready for 2016. The reality is that we will only be able to create these ratings in the 4-5 months of our seasonal downtime and we see this as a 10 year long exercise. Even then, not all 76 PHRF fleets will have converted. The reality is that some of them or some parts of them should use a golf handicapping system, where sailing ability and boat prep is rated.

Objection: Why could we not create the NRR's and publish them for free? This would be a great service to PHRF and would remove the above objections of competing.

Answer: As stated, even with full on selling, which the three of us at Offshore have tried to do in the last two months, more as a trial than anything, it's extremely difficult to convince the local handicappers to change. If we do the above, little to nothing would happen. Sure, a few enlightened fleets would adapt them, but the majority would do the usual, which is to resist any change. And, much worse, the key component/benefit of EPHRF – removing the handicapping from the locals to the national authority – would be lost.

Conclusion: The word "initiative" was used above on purpose. As stated, our (offshore sailing) sport has issues. At best, it's not growing. Realistically, it's in a long slow decline. (From my time at NTG, I know more than most about this). I don't think we, US Sailing/Offshore should stand by and watch. Jack is correctly looking for any and all ways to increase membership in US Sailing. Here, through leadership in a sport crying out for it, is what EPHRF could do.

The bottom line is this. Even if we fail to convince many to change, we will receive serious credit for trying.

Jay Hansen