

## US Women's Match Race Championship Conference Call

**Minutes**  
**10/15/2013**

### **Attendees :**

Outgoing Chair : Suzy Leech  
Incoming Chair : Maggie Shea

Committee Members : Liz Baylis, Chafee Emory, Kathy Lindgren, Katy Lovell,  
Genny Tulloch, Sandi Svoboda

Others : Shannon Bush, Liz Walker, Greg Kiely

### **Agenda :**

- 2013 Event Recap
- 2014 Event Status : bid being prepared by Oakcliff
- Future of USWMRC : Working Group investigating status of all Champs
- Plan to grow the base of Women's Match Racing :
  - State of the union : 2014
  - Encourage women's teams at existing Grade 4s-5s
  - Is there any demand to reintroduce W's events?
  - Investigate all paths for W's skippers
- Thank you's and transfer committee to Maggie

### **Minutes :**

#### **2013 Event Recap :**

The Chicago Match Race Center hosted the 2013 USWMRC and did an outstanding job on all fronts. Eight teams competed at the 4 day event; the first 1.5 days featured a clinic led by Taylor Canfield, with the following 2.5 days reserved for racing. The event was run with very little overhead, and on an extremely strict budget, which worked well for both competitors and host. A scaled entry fee was implemented to make the event more affordable for younger teams. Press and social media were well handled by their group to provide high-visibility for the event.

#### **2014 Event Status :**

Oakcliff is in the process of preparing their bid for the 2014 USWMRC. They have been in negotiations with WIMRA to hold a Grade 1 event again this year as part of the Women's International Match Racing Series. The Committee

agreed that although using the SM40s would add extra financial burden to teams for travel for 6-7 women, it would be their only major expense, other than the entry fee. This concern was far outweighed by the benefits of holding a MR event at an established MR Center that runs scores of events yearly, and the prediction that high-level teams intending to compete at the WIMRS event will look to compete at other prior events in the SM40s. Oakcliff is reviewing their proposal with their Board and will submit a formal bid to US Sailing once approved.

### **Future of USWMRC :**

Liz Walker helped to explain the mission of Championships Working Group. Shannon Bush questioned the level of competition at the USWMRC – whether it is “the pinnacle” of our sport, or is it more “developmental”. Many members of the Committee spoke up (and sent written input after the meeting) about the state of Women’s Match Racing in the US.

Obviously, Women’s Match Racing is not at the same level it was in 2009-2012. Having had Match Racing selected as an Olympic event stacked the deck against amateur teams – and when subsequently removed from the Olympics, even left the professional Match Racers with no where to progress, except into the Open circuit.

There is a new reality in Women’s Match Racing and we must adjust our expectations accordingly. The “pinnacle” of Women’s MR is just that – the highest point of the *current level* of WMR in the US. We are in the midst of a transition back to an amateur sport; the 2013 event proved that this event is still relevant, and the interest is there. Lower level events need to be better utilized to feed teams up the ladder to the USWMRC, and that is our goal for 2014 and beyond. It will take a number of years for Women’s Match Racing to recover from the impact of the Olympics, and we are on our way.

### **Growing the Base :**

The Committee recognizes that the health of the USWMRC is directly related to the strength of the lower level events, and multiple paths need to be followed to increase that base. A number of Committee members supported all-women’s Grade 4 & 5 events to foster a learning environment for new teams. Better use of existing Open events, including the USMRC qualifying events, was also discussed.

Although the primary responsibility of our Committee is running the Championship, we absolutely recognize that growing the sport is the key to our success. The Match Racing Committee, led by Dave Perry, has also been working on this issue; Maggie Shea has volunteered to spearhead combining the two Committees’ efforts.

## **Resolutions :**

The Committee resolved to create a 5-year plan to return the USWMRC to the level of competition it enjoyed before the Olympics. We already have created a rough draft, and the final draft should be available by next week.

The Committee is also developing a survey to be sent to all skippers and crew (including women at our respective clubs who do not MR at present), to determine their level of interest in various areas. Questions to be asked include:

- Why they attend events, and why they don't?
- What would encourage them to attend?
- What type of events would they prefer: Open or W's only?
- What types of boats do they prefer?
- What is an optimal schedule?
- How they can support MR in their respective areas?

The results of this survey will be used to help shape the 5 year plan, and implement the "feeder system" of regattas that support the USWRMC.

Lastly, we have developed an objective look at the pros and cons of combining the MR Championships and of keeping them separate. All these materials will be submitted to the Championships Working Group within the next 2 weeks as feedback for their consideration.

The Committee is excited to welcome Maggie Shea as the incoming Chairman! We look forward to her creative inspirations and the new direction she will take our Championship.