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January 3, 1996

TO: Norm Rabe
FROM: Dick Roberts
SUBJECT: Lifeline Committee

Commodore Gunther called today and asked that I add you to the Committee reviewing the Lifeline Question -- whether to require the shift from single, 18-inch lifelines to double, 24-inch lifelines to occur at LOA = 28 feet or at LOA = 35 feet. (Current ORC Category 4 makes the shift at 28 feet; Off Soundings has made the change at 35 feet, earlier by statement and the last two years by waiver.) The other members of the Committee are:

Frank Bohlen	Ernie Messer
Wes Maxwell	John Philip Smyth

I "convened" a meeting by mail -- by a letter of December 10, 1995, copy enclosed. It was my hope that I would get responses from all and then I could develop a report from those responses. So far, Messer and Smyth have replied, with copies to the other Committee members. I've enclosed copies for you, as well.

We may have to meet, after all, although that will be inconvenient for Messer and Smyth (New Haven and Guilford). Please see if you can reply by January 10th, so I can decide if a meeting will be required.

cc: Frank Bohlen
Ernie Messer
Wes Maxwell
John Philip Smyth
Bill Gunther

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January 12, 1996

Report of the Lifeline Committee

The Committee was appointed to review the Off Soundings Club's requirements for lifelines and to recommend changes, if any, to our current policy.

Scope

The sole point at issue is the cross-over point above which the requirement for at least 18-inch, single lifelines becomes a requirement for at least 24-inch, double lifelines. (Another point that was raised at the October, 1995 meeting had to do with slack lifelines, but is not covered by this report, as it is a non-problem. Our Standards require taut lifelines, and the remedy for non-compliance is protest and discipline.)

History

Early on, the Club encouraged, but did not require, conformance to the Offshore Equipment List, Category 4. In 1977, the Club issued its adaptation of that Category 4 list, converting the language and rating terminology to terms its members could relate to and eliminating provisions that did not apply to Off Soundings Club events. The cross-over point of 21 foot IOR rating was translated, for Off Soundings purposes, to 35 feet LOA. The ORC Category 4 list subsequently (1986 or earlier) defined the 21 foot rating to be 28 feet LOA, but the Club did not change its requirements. In 1994, the Club decided to issue its own Standards, based on the ORC Regulations for Category 4, and the First Notice for the 1994 Spring Race Series had enclosed with it a copy of those Regulations. Owners of boats in the 28 to 35 foot range pleaded for time to make the change, and it was decided to grandfather, for 1994, boats in that range that complied with the earlier requirements. This grandfather provision was extended for the 1995 racing season.

Discussion

Ernie Messer, a member of US SAILING's Safety at Sea Committee, the CCA's Safety at Sea Committee, and involved in Inspection of competitors in the Newport-Bermuda Race and the Marion-Bermuda Race, recommends that we adhere to the published ORC Category 4 Regulations, for these reasons:

- In today's litigious society, following the accepted standards as closely as possible is requisite, unless you are prepared to defend yourself as an "expert" qualified to make changes to a Nationally and Internationally accepted safety standard.
- The bodies, US SAILING and IYRU, that write the standards, have more input about what's going on in racing around the world, and can spend more time considering what is a reasonable "minimum" standard than can our Board.
- Our racers are for the most part aware and in compliance with the ORC Regs, as many other races require them.
- Any small adjustments to the Regs for local use can be dealt with in a more universally accepted, and easily understood manner in the Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions.

Frank Bohlen agrees, saying that those involved have had plenty of notice that they'll have to make a change. Perhaps a waiver, on a case-by-case basis, would be needed, for special, hardship cases.

Wes Maxwell also agrees, but said that we could pick a date, announce it, and then make the change at that time.

J. Philip Smyth, however, has a different view: If the Board truly feels that safety is the issue, then all boats should be required to conform to the ORC Category 4 requirements. If, on the other hand, the Board feels that potential liability is the issue, the exposure, with his suggested change, is minimal, and we have insurance to cover claims that should never have been made in the first place. His suggested change adds the following to the sentence that requires conformance to the OSC Standards:

Yachts 28 ft LOA to 35 ft LOA which conformed to the previous OSC standard, (at least 18-inch single lifelines) are urged but not required to conform to the change in the lifeline standard.

Dick Roberts shares this view.

Norm Rabe was asked to try and define the problem.

- For many years, manufactures have been delivering boats with 24-inch lifelines, single or double. This includes 24-inch bow and stern pulpits, where pulpits are included. The number of boats with 18-inch lifelines in the 28 ft to 35 ft LOA range is small.

- Many of these designs have single lifelines -- even today, new boats are being delivered with single lifelines, even though the ORC Category 4 requirements for double lifelines have been in place since before 1986, and even though many of the boats are "race-equipped." [Note that Category 4 is defined as applying to "short races, close to shore in relatively warm or protected waters normally held in daylight." In short, just about any racing desired -- so, these builders might be considered liable for supplying a product that doesn't meet a safety standard.]

- Converting a 24-inch single lifeline configuration to a double configuration involves drilling a hole in each stanchion for the new wire, or installing a bracket to support the new wire. Modifications to the pulpits could involve welding in an intermediate rail, or installing an intermediate wire, as above. Note that installing a synthetic line using clove hitches would have the proper appearance but would not satisfy the Off Soundings Club requirement of 5/32" stainless steel wire.

- Information is being compiled regarding the number and designs of boats in the 28 ft to 35 ft LOA range that could be impacted by a decision to eliminate the waiver. Whatever is discovered in the way of older designs having 18-inch lifelines may require separate consideration.

Conclusion

Although not clear-cut, the Committee seems to be favoring the adherence by the Off Soundings Club to the Off Soundings Club Standards, eliminating the waiver. Information being assembled by **Rabe** could influence the final decision, when presented at the January 19, 1996 meeting. In any case, there may be a few special cases requiring special consideration, if the waiver is eliminated.