

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2025



SMALL YACHT SAILING CLUB OF OREGON

STARTING LINE



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Commercial Traffic vs Racers – No Contest, No Winners Only Losers

Denny Damore

This is a long post reflecting the seriousness of this situation. Please read the whole thing and share it with your crew.



An unfortunate incident of interfering with commercial barge traffic occurred during a Winter Sailing on Sundays (WSoS) in November. The location was roughly from Buoy 14 through to near the Upper Airport (UA) wing dam. The first note here is that the channel for commercial traffic actually runs on a bit of a diagonal between those two point

and not up the Washington side of the river as one might expect. At approximately the wing dam, the channel veers toward Washington toward Buoy 18.

The wind that day was a light, general easterly, and there was the usual late fall light to moderate current on the river. The start was between Buoy 14 as the pin end with the signal boat positioned off of RCYC to the south. There were two starts: ORC and Level/One Design in that order. There were at least 25 boats racing. As the barge approached Buoy 14 and maybe as much as a mile from the racers, it began blowing it's horn with 5 blasts. It sounded this "imminent danger" signal a number of times, a minimum of 5 times over the course of several minutes.

The testimony in the two protests hearings and a "video" of the AIS visuals indicate that boats were in the lane, crossing the lane, or paralleling the lane in front of the barge. While 10 boats were protested, there is clear indication that others that were unable to be identified also interfered with this commercial traffic. Nine of the 10 boats were disqualified after two full hearings. A further

consequence of the incident as part of a formal Coast Guard review triggered by a formal complaint from the Schaffer tug was that racing was suspended and a review and rewrite of some of the OCSA Sailing Instructions and safety procedures was necessary before racing could resume.

Here is a list of the after action review observations, conclusions, and procedural changes to our racing on the river going forward:

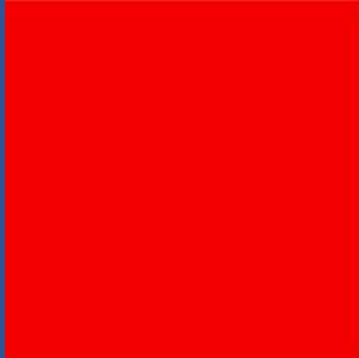
- **Commercial traffic has the right of way** – period. See, Colregs and OCSA SI
- Five horns means that the traffic does not know your intention and there is an imminent risk of collision from their perspective, which is the controlling conclusion under the regulations/rules. Your belief you are not in their way has NO BEARING on the requirement that you get out of the way! As the interfering boat, you must make your action **immediate and decisive** such that the commercial traffic can deduce your intention to avoid a collision by your actions.
- The controlling Colregs in these circumstance refer to the situation of a vessel traveling in a narrow channel with limited maneuverability to avoid a collision. This is the textbook definition of our encounters with barges on this stretch of river. The key here is limited maneuverability. Your sailboat has lots of options and can execute those options quickly. The commercial traffic cannot and neither can they stop quickly. We have been told that a barge coming downriver with the current has effectively no chance of stopping the barge let alone reversing direction in an emergency. If someone falls off your boat while crossing the lane close to the barge, good luck retrieving them before the barge gets to them.
- Further, this limited maneuverability is just the reason why closely **paralleling the lane is also a violation** because it boxes them in and limits their ability to avoid a problem. Several of the boats that were disqualified from this incident were actually running parallel to the barges track. Get far enough away so there is no question that you are not a collision risk.
- The barges are operated with a skipper and a deck hand. That's it. The skipper is in the pilot house looking over the top of one or two barges ahead and there is a huge blind spot in front where sailboats "disappear" as they cross. Just because you think you can see the starboard or port side of the barge, does not mean that they can see you. You must get far

enough away to make sure they can see where you are and, more importantly, where you are going. Remember, **immediate and decisive action**.

- More notes:
 - Under the Sailing Instructions you must have a radio on the boat tuned to 16 and 72, and **you must monitor those channels**.
 - We have implemented a “safety boat” that will monitor commercial traffic (along with the race committee) and this boat will have authority to tell you to take evasive action, which in their conclusion is necessary to avoid interfering with that traffic. **Failure to follow their direction will be grounds for protest** by the RC and potential disqualification.
 - The “Five Horns” so called rule is no longer, if it ever was, the requirement before your boat can be disqualified. In other words, the RC will not be required to wait for 5 horns before directing you to take evasive action or protest you. Putting the onus on the commercial traffic to “alert” you of the danger by blowing 5 horns is not the rule. It is your responsibility to monitor the radio and to keep your head out of the boat to monitor traffic just as you would for other racers. **The onus to avoid is on YOU!**
 - Your motor must be available for use in an emergency (no putting away the outboard) and remember, you can use your motor to get out of the way without any race consequences so long as you don’t improve your position. It is better to receive a race committee penalty less than disqualification than to be disqualified because you interfered or, in the absolute worst case, to have your boat hit by a large tonnage commercial vessel. **USE YOUR MOTOR!**

The goal here is for all of us to be safe. We share this piece of water with commercial traffic and just like we wouldn’t put ourselves in a port-starboard situation where there is no other option but to collide, we cannot put ourselves in a situation where the consequences are so much more tragic. Some of you will remember the incident that Jeff referred to in the all skippers mandatory meeting where in 1992 a sailboat was run over by a barge and two of the sailors died. I can’t even imagine. Let’s each of us agree to be safe, police ourselves and other racers, train our crews, and develop an intentional, dedicated commitment to achieving and preserving a superior sailing safety culture here on the river.

Fare Thee Well, Red Square



Red Square on course board is gone. Number 2 or 14 after alphabetic course listing on course board indicates using Buoy 2 or 14 as Mark #1.

Full Explanation

The Red Square on the SYSCO Course Board has been put to bed as we get ready to start 2026 racing. While it was useful in its time in an awkward and “Portland Weird” kind of way, the time has come to move on. It is true that it somewhat solved one issue relating to the use of the separation buoy, the so-called “Buoy 2,” as Mark #1. It nevertheless also often generated the open question of whether it was *there or not there* (a sailing Schrödinger's Cat, perhaps?) once having passed by the race committee because we racers look at the course board line listing for our pennant and forget to check for the square. I’ve only done that, perhaps, a hundred times. Plus, the red square only referred to Buoy 2, and we actually have the option to use Buoy 14 as Mark #1, but have never done so because there was no way to communicate that option.

So, in the newest revised version of the OCSA General Sailing Instructions (SIs) the square has been eliminated. It has been replaced with the simple addition of a number after the Alphabetic Table of Courses identifier on the course board to indicate that 2 or 14 are now the Mark #1. Note: the new SIs will be published in January and distributed in the usual locations on the web. The full version of provision 10 that covers this topic is provided at the end this article.

To explain the change, let’s look at an example. Assume in a hypothetical race that there are three starting pennants representing the J-24s, Cal-20, and the Ranger 20 fleets in that order: 1, 2, 3. Under the old SI provision, the course board would read as shown here in this first table with the determination as to whether or not Buoy 2 is being used as Mark #1 only being dictated by the use of the Red Square hanging on top of the course board.

Pennant	Alphabetic Listing	Actual Mark Sequence
1 (J-24)	TT	S-1-3-1-3-F
2 (Cal 20)	W	S-1-4-F

Pennant	Alphabetic Listing	Actual Mark Sequence
3 (Ranger)	T	S-1-3-F

The new provision changes the listing on the course board such that, assuming the race committee is choosing to use Buoy 2 as Mark #1 in these sequences, the new course board without the use of the Red Square would read:

Pennant	Alphabetic Listing	Actual Mark Sequence (using Buoy 2 as Mark #1)
1 (J-24)	TT2	S-1-3-1-3-F (S-Buoy 2-3-Buoy 2-3-F)
2 (Cal 20)	W2	S-1-4-F (S-Buoy 2-4-F)
3 (Ranger)	T2	S-1-3-F (S-Buoy 2-3-F)

It's that simple. If using Buoy 2 as Mark #1, then there is a "2" is after the alphabetic course listing. The courses DO NOT change by adding the 2 after the letter. Only what object is used as Mark #1 changes. If there's a 2 or 14 after the letters, Buoy 2 or 14 is Mark #1, respectively. The additional number also DOES NOT mean that you go twice, or in the case of, for example a TT14, W14, or T14, fourteen times around the course. The number of times you go around the course is dictated only by the course letters, e.g., TT or WW, etc., as it always has been.

In the alternative, if the 2 or 14 is NOT included after the alphabetic listing, i.e., it looks like the first table, then look for a Mark #1 that the race committee has set as a floating mark. Easy. Clear, yes? Just look at your course board pennant line and read the course. Period. No need to look for the Red Square. It is retired and enjoying a life in the bottom of the spares box on Poncho.

The actual language of the new rule, 10.2, is below, but please download and read the entire revised SIs before racing starts. Again, publication is slated for January. If you have questions, ask your fleet captains.

10. Courses

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10.1 Courses will be displayed on the signal vessel using alpha numeric placards. Courses may be designated by letter or by course description listing OCSA marks individually. Mark descriptions and locations for individually listed designated marks are provided by the “OCSA designated mark chart” and for letter-designated courses by the “OCSA windward/leeward alphabetic course list”.

10.2 When an OCSA windward/leeward alphabetic course is displayed by letter followed by a number, the OCSA designated mark will be substituted for mark 1 in the alphabetic course; e.g. “T2” shall use OCSA mark “2” as mark 1, or “W14” shall use OCSA mark “14” as mark 1.

10.3 When a course is designated by a list of OCSA marks, the first letter/number is the start, the last is the finish, and those between are rounding marks. When the start and/or finish are not located at designated OCSA mark locations the designation of “S” and “F” for start and finish, respectively, will be used.

10.4 All rounding marks shall be left to port.



Remembering Scott Stevenson



Our sailing community has lost a true sailor, mentor, friend, teacher...Scott Stevenson.

Scott's main focus in public life was volunteerism. Not only was he a long-time volunteer for SYSCO but also for CYC, The Columbia River Sailing Association (his cruising group), Oregon Women's Sailing Association, and several chapters of Toast Masters.

Scott's main passion in life was sailboat racing. He used to say that "anytime there are 2 boats on the river- you can have a race!" And he

often did just that!

When Scott purchased his boat La Dolce Vita (a Hunter 30) he needed a fleet to race in, so he created the SYSCO Cruising Fleet. One of the favorite parameters Scott wrote into the fleet requirements was to have a BBQ attached to your boat. He raced regularly in Sysco's Thurs. night racing and Sailing on Sundays through the winter. Even on days when the sleet was blowing sideways and fully reefed, Scott could not help but smile, He was racing!

Scott also loved teaching through OWSA . He rarely missed a Wednesday Night Sail. His calm, friendly, patient teaching methods taught so many Women to love sailing and of course racing.

Scott also got his Captains license, which allowed him to teach sailing through the American Sailing Association.

ANY TIME someone needed help with ANYTHING, a mechanical problem, help with sailing, docking, speech writing, even dressing up in a toga to help with the torch lighting ceremony during the 2016 "Hunter Olympics", Scott would happily say "you bet, when do you need me?"

Testimonials

"I was lucky enough to spend a spring and summer with Scott doing Wednesday night sails teaching women from OWSA spinnaker sailing. Scott loved it, a sweeter man never walked the docks."

"I was fortunate to land a WNS spot sailing with Scott on La Dolce Vita. I remain so grateful to Scott for generously inviting me to crew on his boat - he is THE reason that I came to love sailboat racing! "

"More than anything Scott taught me to love the water. Scott is the reason I kept at it. I will always cherish the time I spent on LDV, and the knowledge he passed on to me. Rest well, Skipper."

"What has stood out to me the most was Scott's amazing kindness, his love of racing and teaching, as well as his welcoming friendship."

"One race on a very blustery, wet winter day we were the race committee boat. Someone came a bit too close to our anchor line and hooked us - taking us for a ride and almost slamming all of us into the Rose City docks. Even when things were absolute chaos and Scott needed people to do things quickly in a high stress environment - he never yelled and he never lost his cool, and we were able to get the situation under control. That was just the type of person Scott was."

"Scott is the reason that I am now a good sailboat racer, worldwide cruiser and boat mechanic. He gave me the confidence to try ANY THING and be successful or try again. I will miss you so much my dear friend... Sail On Scott"



Eight Bells for Dale Waagmeester



A Celebration of Life was held for Dale Waagmeester (1954-2025) at Portland Yacht Club in early November. Dale was well known to the area sailing community as the head of Bank Sails in the Northwest area and a sailor of regional and national repute. He was born in Portland in 1954, and became involved in the family business, Waagmeester Canvas Products that lead him to sailing and the sailmaking business. He participated in Numerous Oregon Offshore and Swiftsure events in addition to countless races on the Columbia river. He won the Ranger 20 Nationals and the North American One Ton Championship and ran Banks Sails on Alberta St. since 1995. Dale was an old-school designer and has helped many SYSCO sailors with specific sailing needs from new sail designs to equipment requests. He was a multi-faceted athlete playing hockey in his youth and was

elected to the Oregon Lacrosse Hall of Fame in 2015 recognizing his work in expanding high school lacrosse throughout Oregon.

Pacific NW Offshore - International Competition for 50 Years!



Coming in 2026, the Portland Yacht Club and the title sponsor, Schooner Creek Boat Works, will host the 50th year of the Pacific Northwest Offshore International Yacht Race (PNWO). It all began in 1976 as a race from Astoria to Newport, Oregon that the Corinthian Yacht Club, the host club for 49 years, originally

called the "Oregon Offshore." Within a few years, the focus changed to give

keelboats and multihulls a 193 nautical mile course of racing up the Washington coast, past Tatoosh Island, then down the Strait of Juan de Fuca, through (or around) Race Rocks to the harbor entrance of Victoria, BC. The PNWO has continued to maintain its popularity through five decades as its reputation grew becoming a qualifying race for the Pacific Cup to Hawaii, the circumnavigation Van Isle 360 race, as well as the 2,308 nautical mile Vic-Maui International Yacht Race.



As of the end of December, the race is over halfway to the capped registration of 50 boats with 5 months before registration closes. A wide range of Canadian and Puget Sound boats have registered along with our local Portland boats. The local list of racers includes: Tenacious, Free Bowl of Soup, Pathfinder, Soufflé, Apex, Bums Rush, Penelope, the new “Rage,” Sea

Sponge, Swift, Flo with several other Portland boats on the cusp. If all your racing has been around the buoys here in town, the PNWO is the next level of experience because it is a truly unique offshore race. There are likely some crew positions available on these or the upcoming registering boats. Also, the PNWO also always needs volunteers to support the race. The website is: www.pacificnwoffshore.org.

SYSCO Board Meeting Minutes 12/1/25

Present: Richard Samuels, Kelley Frengle, Bruce Newton, Jody Schultz, Sloan Kimball, Melissa Cearlock, Michael Morrissey, Denny Damore, Greg Bown, Jacqueline Pitter, Jan Burkhart, Sara Gordon, Carisa Bohus, Stephanie Walker, Keith Marcoe

Meeting began at 6:03pm.

Financials/ Budget:

Sloan gave a financial update and presented the 2026 budget. We have ~\$14k checking, ~\$15k savings, and we will likely end the year \$2500 above budget, with

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~\$20k in the bank. Nothing else has changed. We discussed the surplus we are building up because we aren't paying for physical trophies. A suggestion was made to buy higher ticket items for the gift for all members this year. Michael proposed to increase the fleet party reimbursement amount from \$50 to \$100; adjustment made, which is only \$100 increase from budget. Jackie suggested we do more CPR, first aid, and fire suppressant training. Sloan cautioned us about spending more than we make; draft budget for next year, prior to any changes, is ~+\$630. We are saving for Poncho replacement every year; currently we have saved \$15k for Poncho replacement. We are working on training ideas. Carisa proposes engagement with the SYSCO members for other events.

Stephanie made a motion to add a line item to education \$500 and delete boat show expense. Michael and Jackie 2nded it. There was discussion about using our surplus for this and about other ways to raise money besides increasing dues. Greg Bown offered to donate money or match funds for safety education to kickstart the education fund. Greg and Denny will work on the education game plan and present a detailed proposal next month. Richard suggested taking the \$250 out of the Boat Show budget line item because we aren't doing it this year; adjustment made. Carisa expressed discomfort adding line items in isolation without looking at the budget as a whole. Vote taken. Motion approved.

Sloan made a motion to approve the 2026 budget as presented and modified. Stephanie seconded. Vote taken. Motion approved.

The group agreed that the current budget serves as a good starting point, though there was interest in reviewing budget more thoroughly next year, starting mid-year with planning for the following budget year.

Calendar:

Denny shared the 2026 calendar and walked through it month-by-month. Denny will sort out the Dave Perry event conflict with Easter weekend. Discussion regarding moving race clinic date; Denny will adjust. Discussed possible needs for a basic rules class; Denny will add. Need to add a Poncho training April or May; it doesn't have to take place prior to Spring Series; Denny will add. May 2nd Crew Overboard Race – suggestion to do it later in the afternoon to avoid CRYA's opening day parade. Jackie suggested a one design relay race. Good date would be 9/3. Jackie will explore this possibility and follow-up regarding logistics. This can be added to the calendar at a later date. All Sailors Twilight Barbecue – Denny will investigate changing it to Tuesday 9/1. When the calendar is final, Denny

will send it to everyone (and for the website), and Melissa will begin work on the Regatta Network setup.

OCSA Sailing Instructions:

Denny shared the latest version of OCSA General Notice of Race & Sailing Instructions, which was also sent via email earlier in the day. These have been updated based on feedback. Denny walked through the changes. Some areas to note:

- Section 10.2 will eliminate the red square.
- We will use Blue Flags for the finish line.
- Removed rule that if you don't start within 5 minutes you can't start.
- Section 17, Safety Regulations, are the biggest changes; sections 17.4 and 17.5 are new.
- Boats can't take a motor off the back; that will be a cultural change for smaller boats.

The discussion also covered the requirement for boats to have radios tuned to channel 72 during races and clarified that starting a motor does not result in disqualification. Everyone should read through the document and let Denny know if you have any comments. A new course chart will need to be updated on Sailpdx and a new laminated course chart needs to be made (with distribution method, perhaps at a mandatory skipper meeting).

Winter Sailing on Sunday Marine Traffic Interference

Denny summarized the mandatory skippers meeting and shared the presentation from Jeff Strong, which was also sent via email earlier in the day. In addition, a protest hearing took place; 7 boats were thrown out. 3 additional boats are being protested; that hearing is taking place on 12/3. The safety quotient will be updated by making some changes to PRO/CRO/volunteers and lead/chase boat. Denny reviewed the Winter SoS Skipper Acknowledgement form that Skippers were required to complete. For other skippers that register for future SYSCO classes, they will have to attest to these things when they register.

Scott Stevenson Memorial

Coming up on December 14th. Let's find a way that we can honor him, and any of our deceased members. Discussed ideas – use our website, honor him at an

event, include an article in our newsletter honoring his life. No decisions made, more discussion to occur later.

Adjourn: 7:48p

Next Meeting is January 5th. Happy Holidays!

