

Courses in iceboating

-Through the years

-Advantages and disadvantages

Until 1933 iceboating in Europe was done in development classes with few restrictions...like the 20 and 15 meter sail area classes.... The monotype-XV was the result of a demand for a cheaper one design.....

-Sailing at that time was done on a triangular course; one upwind mark, then a reach to one leeward mark, then a beam reach to the other leeward mark and then the next lap.....

This course was ideal for the previous speed differences in design... and the way races were started then; in groups 30 seconds apart and with a timed finish..... keeping overtaking and close situations to a minimum.....

-In 1937, the call for better racing and avoidance of the spins occurring in the beam reach led to the adoption of the O course already in use in the USA.....This is one top mark and one leeward mark, both rounded to the left.... This remained the course of choice....until the early/mid 1970 s

-The 8 course, designed around that time by then DN king Endel Vooremaa for sailing on narrow areas (so only useful with a certain wind directions... and not intended for week long championships)... seems to have been introduced around that time in the DN and presumably in the other Soviet classes as well..... The 8 course as we know it today is the same two marks as the O, but the top mark rounded to the left, the bottom mark to the right.....

-This has been used in the DN from then on, until a near fatal accident (I was there, I saw the blood on the ice) at the swedish championship gave the safety concerned sailors more of a voice and led to abandonment of the 8 course in 1997 (except for the monotype class) and the consequent introduction of dolly marks to further divide oncoming groups of iceboats.... This is especially important when one side of the course is better/ faster....

In the placing of the leeward dolly mark there is one class specific thing that needs to be taken into account:

Because of the spin out risk and the long sheet, some sailors turn straight into the wind after the mark (to make taking the sheet in easier for the crew) and tack right after the dolly mark (for ease

Of the crew and to save the energy and speed lost in a later tack) This takes them right into where all the boats behind them are getting ready for the mark rounding.

- The dolly mark must be placed high enough into the wind to make sure tacking without having pulled the sheet on fully is impossible. This distance is dependent on conditions so cannot be put into meters.

The most recent alteration of the O course came from the USA, after always opposing any changes throughout history.....This is the so-called inline course, which is only a difference in the finishing line, with that being set between the leeward mark and the middle of the starting line so the ideal

finishing position is as far away from the scorers as possible..... (after a collision between a DN and a scorer in 2015 Poland)

The advantages of the 8 course I have been told of are only theoretical to me:

1 The 8 course is more tactical.....

In both the O and 8 course all boats have to enter a new part of the course in the same direction. In both courses each boat is free to tack or gybe as soon as he clears the dolly mark..... No difference!

2 The 8 course is safer right of way wise at the leeward mark....

Yes, theoretically a boat can come in downwind, full speed on starboard tack at the leeward mark and have rights over all port tackers..... but this is only theoretical! Nobody does this... You would have to bear off at the mark, gybe (and thereby lose your right of way) and turn upwind right there; make a full 180 degree turn..... This can't be done... especially not in a stern steerer with its spinning potential..... I have never seen this maneuver tried, not even in the DN.....

-The advantages of the O course over the 8 are all in safety..... Where every boat on the 8 course has to cross through a fleet of oncoming traffic twice every lap, this is only a choice in the O course..... You can, but you're not forced to plus, if you decide to take more tacks; take extra risk you can still only come across a downwind boat that makes extra gybes, takes extra risks itself.. This means the risk lies with the risk takers, who must and will be more aware... This is especially good for the monotype class because of its wide spectrum of level and ambition.... The risk averse can sail the big diamond; one tack per beat and one gybe per reach and have zero risk of an upwind-downwind collision..... I bet there's a good percentage that takes that option....

.. Actually, the smaller the course is (the unsafer in the 8 course), the safer the O course tends to get..... Because the percentage of the fleet that chooses to sail the higher risk crossing course with oncoming traffic goes down.....

In short; the shorter the course, the safer the O course and the more dangerous the 8 course...

3 One more argument in favour of the 8 course I have heard is the fact that the DN fleet goes faster around the leeward mark to the left than the monotype does it to the right.....

To this I say: yes, they may corner faster, but this only reflects on the cornering ability of a DN; it's inherent stability compared to the monotype's instability in cornering... It has absolutely nothing to do with the difference in turning left or right..... Both boats are symmetrical..... Let us just be glad the monotype sailors are so careful at the leeward mark..... This further reinforces my argument that point 2 is not one that favours the 8 course either.....!

Best Regards,

Daan Schutte, 25-7-2017