



MATCH RACING

Why & How to Get Involved

*Compiled by the US Sailing Match Racing Committee
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The Match Racing Fever

Match racing is the best discipline in sailing for a number of reasons. The quick, two-lap race format emphasizes the need for perfect boat-handling and teamwork from the crew. Becoming a match racer will improve all aspects of your sailing, specifically your time-on-distance skills, starting line positioning, understanding of the rules, short-course strategy and boat-on-boat tactics. Additionally, the tournament-style format maximizes the number of races per day and puts extra pressure on each win.

“I started match racing in college and was instantly hooked on the game. I love how it requires you to come up with a game plan to knock out the opponent based on the wind, current, position, course strategy and racing rules of sailing. The team dynamic is crucial to success, as everyone has to think on their toes and act in the moment to adapt to constant changes. There is a physical and mental component to this type of sailing that is unlike any other sailing I have done and for that reason I am totally hooked!”

- Stephanie Roble, ranked #5 in the ISAF Women’s World Rankings

“I’m addicted to the fast, aggressive nature of match racing. I have been ever since my first Junior Gold Cup in 2002, when I saw Peter Holmberg at the Bermuda Gold Cup. I was impressed by how the event drew all the best match racers in the world, and I knew I wanted to be a part of it someday. I now race at the highest level on the World Match Racing Tour, and it’s always a challenge to balance fleet race tactics and boat-on-boat strategy. There is never a dull moment.”

–Taylor Canfield, Skipper of Team US One, 2013 Match Racing World Champion

2013 America’s Cup winning skipper Jimmy Spithill (Oracle Team USA) was asked:

How did you get onto the path towards professional sailing and ultimately the America’s Cup?

“We started doing youth match racing around the age of 16, and the reason for that was we couldn’t really afford a boat to do the Olympics or to take it too seriously, but with this match racing route the boats are provided and they are all the same, and when you did the circuit all the boats were provided again. So you just had to really come up with the money for the flights.

“The match racing circuit was a great way to get out there with a young team and learn how to compete as a team. You’re on the road. You have to learn to deal with the different personalities; the pressures. It’s tough. But it’s so rewarding when you get it right and you can do it with a bunch of people that you really enjoy spending time with. It’s the ultimate, and that feeling is very addictive, especially when you begin to get it on a bigger scale.”



Where to Begin: How to Find Regattas and Clinics

One way is to open the document called [US Sailing List of Match Racing Contacts](#), and look for clubs and centers in your area. Then email the contacts, introduce yourself, and ask them what the match racing opportunities are at their clubs and centers. Another way is to go to the US Sailing and other calendars (find links on page 10 and look for events that are either in your area or that interest you; then contact the person listed for that event for more information and assistance. Clinics around North America are also listed at the North U site (see page 10).

The Invitation Process

Match Race Grading Regulations

Match race regattas must limit the number of skippers at each event because venues are required to supply the boats for competitors. Most events are limited to 8, 10 or 12 skippers. Event organizers accept “requests for invitation” from sailors, and selectively issue invitations based on certain criteria set forth by ISAF per each level event 1-5, 1 being the highest.

Grade 5's and 4's - the base of the pyramid

As entry-level match race regattas, Grade 4's and 5's are casual with a focus on development and learning. There is no grading-specific competitor criterion; skipper ranking doesn't matter as much. Grade 5's are the best place to familiarize yourself with match racing in a low-pressure environment. Grade 5's can be single-day events, whereas Grade 4's must be held over two days.

Grade 3

Grade 3's are the most popular level regattas, and they usually feature a mix of new and experienced teams. The grading regulations for Grade 3's are stricter than the Grade 4's, but still allow for new match racers to compete. ISAF requires these events to have at least 8 teams, 30% of which must either be a different nationality than that of the host nation OR have travelled more than 500 km from their ordinary place of residence to the event venue. (This restriction is waived for national championships.) For experienced racers, Grade 3's are a great place to start match racing.



Grade 2

Grade 2's often serve as qualifiers for Grade 1 events. They are generally much more competitive than Grade 3's and the invitation process is highly selective. Some Grade 2's have prize money. ISAF requires that the field of competitors at this level be composed of international and highly ranked teams. More specifically, the 12 top-ranked skippers in the field of competitors must bring a certain number of “skipper points” (see box) which correspond to the skipper's ISAF ranking 4 months prior to the event. Open Grade 2's require 50 points; Women's Grade 2's require 35 points. See the table on the right for the breakdown of skipper points per ranking position.

ISAF Ranking	Skipper Points
1-10	20
11-20	15
21-30	11
31-40	8
41-50	6
51-60	5
61-70	4
71-80	3
81-90	2
91-100	1

Grade 1

This is the highest level of ISAF grading below the World Match Racing Tour. The same skipper point policy applies from the Grade 2, except that Grade 1's must have 120 skipper points for Open events and 80 for Women's events. Grade 1's often have prize money and are the most selective invitation process.

How to Start Your Campaign: Solidify a Team

By Alice Manard Leonard

The first step in solidifying your match race team is to define the team you are trying to build. This process involves asking yourself a few key questions: How many people do we need to have on our team? What type of commitment are we looking for from the team members?

The size of the team will be primarily driven by the types of boats and events you plan to sail. Most match races require a team of 3 to 6 sailors, depending on the size of boats and whether it is an Open or Women's event. If you are an all-female team planning to compete in several Open events in Swedish Match 40s, you'll need a fairly large team. If you plan to compete mainly in events using J/22s or Sonars, your team will be on the smaller side.

It's also important to understand what type of commitment you expect from each team member and what they are able to commit to. You don't necessarily need 100% commitment from all team members for every event. But good teamwork and communication go a long way in match racing, so it pays to have a consistent crew list. As you build your team, make sure you communicate with your teammates about the planned schedule and their ability to commit to those events.

The next step in solidifying your team is to identify the specific skills and abilities you are looking for in your team members. It's important for a match racing team to have individuals who are strong in a few key areas, particularly sail trim and tactical knowledge. The pace and intensity of match racing make the crew a critical factor in tactical decision making and boat speed. While some team members may already bring these skills to the team, a teammate who is willing to invest in learning these key skills can be just as valuable in the long run.

In addition to specific skills and abilities, you need to consider the size and strength requirements of each role on the boat and the overall team weight. Some roles (trimmers, for example) require a good deal of strength and athleticism in order to effectively execute the fast-paced boat handling needed for match racing. Your bow person will also need to be strong and agile, but is likely to be one of the smaller team members in order to maintain the proper weight distribution across the boat. And, generally speaking, in keelboats it's beneficial to sail as close to the weight limit as possible. For most Open events the weight limit is 87.5kg (193 lbs) multiplied by the team size; for Women's events the weight limit is 68kg (150 lbs) multiplied by the team size. So consider your overall team size when identifying potential team members.

The final criterion to consider in putting together your match racing team is personality. You and your teammates will spend a significant amount of time traveling and racing together. To keep things fun and productive, it's important that you and your teammates not only enjoy each other's company, but also display mutual respect for one another. Your teammates don't have to be your best friends, but they do need to be people you are comfortable with and enjoy competing with.



How to Request an Invitation

First of all, you should reach out to event organizers and ask if they have a specific “Request For Invitation” form you can submit. In your initial outreach, attach your sailing resume to provide information about you and your team. On paper, this is what event organizers look at first when evaluating prospective skippers:

ISAF Ranking

- Your ranking 4 months prior to the first day of the event is used for grading purposes
- Include your highest ISAF ranking, month and year
- If you are unranked, provide a strong sailing resume and explain your sailing successes
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Sailing Resume

- Keep it to a page!
- Draw attention to your strengths, and paint a picture of your team
- See the example resume below

Nationality/Hometown- Grade 1, 2 and 3's require geographical diversity of skippers, so indicate your current hometown and include your ISAF ID, which shows your nationality.

SKIPPER NAME, TEAM NAME

ISAF Rank: xx (date), skipper age and hometown

Contact info: email: team/skipper email,

Facebook: team page? (not individual)

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT: Explain your team's background, campaign and goals in 3-4 sentences.

TEAM BIO: Answer the following questions: Who are you? Who is on your team? What are you trying to accomplish?

SAILING EXPERIENCE

Match Racing: Include the highlights of your match race experience. (up to 10)

- Regatta Name, grade & year, finish / number of boats competing, position onboard
- Clinic Name, coach, year, position onboard

Keelboat Racing: Explain your keelboat experience as a skipper and/or crew. If event organizers can't offer you a skipper invitation, they will often recommend you as crew so you can familiarize yourself with the venue and boats first. (mention 5 of the best)

- Regatta Name, grade & year, finish/ number of boats competing, position onboard

Fleet Racing: if you do not have much match racing or keelboat experience, demonstrate that you are a competitive sailor and would bring value to the event in other ways. (5-7 bullet points here)

- Teams you have been on – college, high school, keel boats or local teams – and the role you played. For example, “captain of college sailing team and starting crew, '00-'04”
- Junior Sailing – name a couple (not many!) big junior sailing accomplishments





How to Market and Fund Your Campaign

By Alice Manard Leonard

There's no question about it: match racing can get expensive! The cost of entry fees, team travel expenses, team gear and the occasional lost damage deposit add up quickly. Even for a team competing regionally at the Grade 4/5 level, this expense can be daunting. Outside of the professional ranks, most match racers expect to use their personal funds to cover at least a portion of the expense. However, there are many sources of financial support that can be tapped into to help offset some of the expense. These include individual donors, yacht clubs or foundations that support sailors.

The first step in marketing your campaign is identifying the targets for your marketing efforts. The most effective channels are those with which you have a personal connection. This can include individuals you know personally, your yacht club(s) or foundations in your area. These should be your first line of marketing targets. Secondly, you should consider targets where you might not have as strong of a connection, but there is some reason to believe they may be interested in supporting your campaign. And finally, mass marketing will help build your team 'brand' and could generate future leads as your team progresses.

Regardless of who you are targeting, you'll need to get organized in order to effectively market your campaign. This starts with the basics: team goals and objectives, schedule, budget, and team member bios. Your goals, objectives and team member bios can be publicized on a team website or Facebook page for a wider audience to see. Your schedule and budget don't necessarily need to be publically available, but should be ready to provide to prospective donors at any time.

When it comes to developing marketing materials, there is no substitute for great photos of your team in action on the race course. And the best sailing shots are of teams that look sharp in their team gear. Even if you aren't a pro, it pays to look like one! In addition to making for better pictures, team gear is also more likely to attract the eye of the on-the-water photographers at events, which increases your chances of getting those great action shots you need. Try to get a yacht club, foundation or local retailer to provide at least team shirts or pinnies. Otherwise, the cost of a few shirts/pinnies to make your team look sharp is well worth it.

Once you have your team's marketing materials developed, it's time to make the "ask". When deciding who to ask, how much to ask for, and how to ask, keep in mind the following tips:

- Warm up to it: Get to know the donor/foundation/yacht club rep and familiarize them with your match racing efforts before making the ask. Once they are familiar with and enthusiastic about your campaign, then approach them with your funding request.
- Face to face: Whenever possible, make your request in person. It's easy for someone to say no to you over email or to discard something mailed to them. It's much harder to say no to your smiling, enthusiastic face!
- Ask for a specific amount: It's helpful to donors if you give them guidance on how much you would like them to contribute. If they are going to donate to your campaign, they will take your guidance into consideration and then decide how much to donate. It may be less than you asked for, but at least you set the bar at your target figure. If you don't provide them with guidance, you could end up leaving money on the table if the donor underestimates your objectives. And, if they aren't going to donate anyway, then there is no harm done by asking for an amount.
- Don't take "no" personally: Fundraising is tough and can be awkward for a lot of people. And you will get many more "no's" than "yes's". Keep in mind that the "no's" aren't personal. Donors may have already made all of their commitments for the year. Or they may not be in a position to financially support you at this time. But by maintaining those connections even after a "no", you can build a strong, enthusiastic fan base. And who knows what might happen down the road.
- Remember "thank you": Hand-written thank you notes to every donor, regardless of the amount they contribute, are a great way to show your appreciation for their support. Take the time to write a short, personal note to every donor, letting them know how their contribution helped your team (regatta results/anecdotes, etc.). Fundraising is about building relationships; and a timely, sincere thank-you note is one of the key building blocks.

When your campaign is up and running, social media is a great way to keep your supporters up to date on your progress. Email updates can be useful as well, but after a long day on the water it's often hard to summon the energy to write a recap of your day. Social media allows you to quickly and effectively provide a large audience with quick updates, links to results, etc.

Where to look for Grant Money

The Clever Pig website (www.cleverpig.org) is a great place to start when looking for grants in aid. You will find a comprehensive list of foundations that sponsor junior and young adult sailors. Several grant foundations and major yacht clubs also sponsor sailors from their region specifically. Another place to start is contacting a “local hero” and asking if they can recommend you to a local grant foundation or yacht club.

Sponsorship Proposal

Each foundation has a specific application process, but the components for a sponsorship proposal are usually similar:

1. Cover Letter- Introduce yourself and explain why you are writing
2. Resume – be sure to tailor your generic sailing resume to the grant foundation
3. Sponsorship Proposal – some foundations will accept your full sponsorship proposal, which should include:
 - Team Bio(s) and Mission Statement (1-2 pages)
 - Schedule and Training Program (half a page)
 - Team Results and/or Individual Resumes (no more than 1-2 pages)
 - Team Budget – see example below
 - Sponsorship Levels and Activation– see example
 - Description of Media Outlets - Facebook, Twitter, Website or Blog (include “reach” statistics when possible)

SAILING TEAM BUDGET- Season or Event					
	Event A	Event B	Event C	Event D	Season Totals
Travel Costs					
airfare					
car rentals					
fuel					
baggage					
Event Costs					
entry fees					
food					
accommodation					
Training					
charter fees					
Coaching fees					
food costs					
Equipment					
branded kit					
sailing gear					
	Grand Total for Season:				

Example of Sponsorship Levels (borrowed from Epic Racing Team, Stephanie Roble)

PLATINUM SPONSOR: \$30,000.00- Title Sponsor

- Naming rights of the team
- Premium XL logo on all uniforms and media
- Company flag flown from yacht whenever possible
- 1st sponsor recognition in all media/ceremony speeches
- Invitation to all opening and closing ceremonies
- Team engagement opportunities during promotional events, clinics, private coaching, etc.

GOLD SPONSOR: \$15,000.00

- Large logo on sleeve of all uniforms
- Large logo placement on website
- Recognition in all media/ceremony speeches
- Large sponsor logo in all media releases
- Invitation to all opening and closing ceremonies & VIP access to event whenever possible
- Team engagement opportunities negotiable

SILVER SPONSOR: \$5,000.00

- Medium logo on back of racing uniforms and website
- Recognition in all media/ceremony speeches
- Medium sponsor logo in all media releases
- Team engagement opportunities possible

BRONZE SPONSOR: \$1,000.00

- One small logo where best fits on uniforms
- Small logo placement on website
- Recognition in media/ceremony speeches
- Small sponsor logo in all media releases

ASSOCIATE SPONSOR: \$500.00 or less

- Name/logo on website in donor page
- Small logo in media releases

The donation of airline miles is also greatly appreciated.



What to Expect at a Match Race Regatta

Match race regattas are different from most fleet race regattas in a few ways. Do the research beforehand and make sure your team is prepared.

Read the NOR

- Know the schedule - some events are mandatory for the skipper to attend, such as skipper's meetings or press conferences.
- Some venues require that all sailors have or wear life jackets.
- Find out what food and/or water will be provided; match race days are long!

Be ready for the weigh-in

- Every ISAF graded event will have a weigh-in. The average crew weight should be listed in the NOR.
- Assign target weights for team members and make sure your team is comfortable. Make sure crew members know what time the weigh-in will occur so they can bring light shorts and tee shirt in case your team is close.
- Teams that do not make weight will not be able to compete.

Make a break-down kit

- Bring a couple rolls of electrical tape.
- Because bosuns can't help fix repairs during races, you should have some extra pins, split rings, extra tell tales and small shackles.
- Keep the bag small. You will have to rotate boats with it, and you don't want to add extra weight to the boat.

Match racing specific equipment

- Buy a Y-Flag.
- Gloves are usually crucial for all crew onboard except the skipper.
- Sun screen
- Gallon-sized Ziploc bag - some skippers like to keep their pairing sheet in a baggie so it doesn't get wet.



How to Get Better at Match Racing

By Dave Perry

One effective way to learn and improve in match racing is to go to a clinic. See the schedule of clinics on the North U website. If there is not a clinic near you, and there is interest in match racing in your area, you or someone from your area should contact North U about setting one up. Many regattas have a clinic as part of the regatta (often called "clinegattas"); these are great opportunities to get some instruction and coaching, as well as some actual racing.

Another very effective way to learn is to crew for an experienced match racer in training or a regatta. Contact the organizers of events and tell them you are interested in crewing. They can pass your name along, or give you the names and emails of the skippers in their event or area. Or if you know some active match racers, offer to crew for them.

Be sure to read and watch the excellent DVD's and texts/playbooks that are available about match racing. They are all accessible on the North U website (see page 10). The Match Racing Playbook I wrote, published by North U, also contains pages of drills for one and two boats that will quickly improve your match racing.

All you need to try it yourself is two boats. Set a starting line and a windward mark, and go at it. Do the drills in the Playbook, do lots of practice starts, then do some races. If the spinnaker handling is not fluent yet, do the match race training without spinnakers, and then do some dedicated spinnaker training to get better at it.

Finally, go to regattas. You may not win a lot of races at first, but you will learn quickly from your losses. Pick regattas suitable to your experience (Grade 4 and 5 for just getting started; Grade 3 when you feel comfortable with the game, then Grade 2 when you are ready to really challenge yourself). When not racing, observe the racing. Offer to ride with the umpires (they are often more than willing to let you ride and observe, and you will learn a ton from doing so).

I encourage you to keep a notebook, so you can build on your experiences and not repeat mistakes if possible. Make sections for boat handling, boat speed in the various boats you will sail, and tactics in the prestart, upwind and downwind legs, and in the penalty killing area. Also keep a section for questions, and look for opportunities to get them answered. Most good match racers enjoy sharing what they know and helping others learn quickly.



Useful Resources

CALENDARS

[ISAF Upcoming Events](#) (under "Discipline" select "Match Racing")
[US Sailing Match Racing Page](#)
[Chicago Match Race Center](#)
[Sail Sheboygan](#)
[Oakcliff Sailing](#)
[North U Clinics](#)
[Women's International Match Racing Association \(WIMRA\)](#)

US CHAMPIONSHIPS AND SERIES

[US Sailing Women's Match Racing Championship](#)
[US Sailing Match Racing Championship](#)
[ICSA Match Racing Nationals](#)
[California Dreamin' Series](#)
[US Grand Slam Series](#)
[Great Lakes Events \(YRUGL\)](#)
[SoCal Youth Match Racing Series \(SODA\)](#)

NORTH U RESOURCES

[North U Homepage](#)
[Match Racing Playbook by Dave Perry](#)
[Match Racing by Henry Menin and John Cutler](#)
[Welcome to Match Racing - free, introductory DVD](#)

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

[US Sailing Resources for Match Racing](#)
[ISAF Match Racing Rankings](#)
[Match Racing Call Book](#)
[US Sailing List of Match Racing Contacts](#)

INTERNATIONAL SERIES

[Alpari World Match Racing Tour](#)
[Women's International Match Racing Series](#)

