

RS800 Boom take-off / crew sheeting proposal

Proposal:

Allow an optional configuration of crew sheeting the mainsail directly from the boom by amending the RS800 class rules.

Objective:

Increase participation at club level and grow fleet sizes at circuit events both nationally and internationally by appealing to a wider range of sailors.

Background:

When the RS800 was introduced c1999, boom sheeting was relatively new and not the norm outside of the 18' Skiff class. 17 years on and crews are now trimming the mainsail in virtually all skiff classes (29er, 29erXX, 49er, 49erFX, B14, International 14, Cherub, 18' Skiff etc). The proposed rule change would offer teams the choice of either continuing with the current configuration whereby the helm takes the sheet from the cockpit floor, or allowing the crew to trim the mainsail directly from the boom. By allowing this choice, we aim to maximise the boat's appeal to the widest possible range of sailors without detracting from the original ethos of the class.

Benefits to the class:

1. Appeal to the next generation:

As the focus of today's youth sailing continues to shift towards high performance classes and away from more conventional boats, young sailors entering the circuit are increasingly eager to sail challenging, "skiff" classes.

Feedback from the large numbers of current and former 29er sailors who have trialled the boat has highlighted that these sailors tend not to be excited by the boat in its current configuration and under current class rules. Crews feel that their inability to take the main from the boom means that they will be less involved than in the 29er and therefore consider it to be less challenging. Meanwhile, helms admit to feeling daunted by the "double whammy" of having to learn to take the mainsheet as well as learning to trapeze. Many teams with experience sailing "skiff" classes consider the current mainsheet ruling to be a less efficient and therefore less rewarding format of sailing. By allowing the proposed optional "off boom sheeting", we are more likely to prevent the class from being overlooked by this important new generation of sailors.

2. Increase female participation:

Ever since the boat was introduced, the mainsheet load has been an area of concern for smaller helms. By allowing the proposed "off boom sheeting" not only will the boat be more manageable from the perspective of the helm, but the loads will be decreased due to the ability to use end-boom 3:1 sheeting. This immediately makes the boat more attractive to female helms and all female teams and makes it a viable transition class or trainer for the 49er and 49er FX.

3. Maintain great fleet racing:

While performance gains are possible in certain conditions, the general consensus is that teams who opt for crew sheeting will not find an immediate advantage. The proposed "off boom sheeting" will require a high degree of teamwork between helm and crew, which makes sustained peak performance more difficult to achieve. Additionally, unlike other skiff classes, the RS800 has a "soft" mainsail, i.e. not fully-battened,

making the potential benefits of the crew trimming the mainsail marginally less distinct and harder to optimise.

4. Financial viability:

By increasing the RS800's breadth of appeal, we'll see a higher level of demand for the class, which alongside increased participation will lead to higher resale value. Additionally, the costs associated with modifying the boat to allow for crew sheeting from the boom are relatively low.

The full kit will have instructions and be ready to be attached to the boat:

1 x mainsheet (the mainsheet has been spliced onto the block and the rear strop has also been spliced to the P-clips, to make this easy to apply)

1 x extra 2.3m carbon tiller extension with UJ and fixings

1 x cover for the mainsheet on the boom

1 x rear eye and fixings

1 x 3000mm of shock cord

3 x D12 boom strops

1 x set of instructions

The system uses the current mainsheet blocks and ratchet block from the original setup to reduce the cost.

Total price incl VAT is £200.88

Introductory price of £160.70 until 1st May 2017

Summary:

The class must decide whether to update the class rules to allow the option of crew sheeting from the boom. In doing so, the RS800s could see increased participation and overall popularity, most notably by young sailors and female teams.

By choosing not to allow the rule change, the class risks becoming less relevant and desirable over time to the growing number of alternative exciting and high performance options either within the sport or outside of it.

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