

Technical Reviews, Part 3: Christmas 1984

Philip Tolhurst · BDA Magazine 1984 Christmas, p. 4

Summary. Philip Tolhurst explains the 1984 package of Dragon class rule changes. The spinnaker pole maximum is raised to 2,250 mm from the front face of the mast (about 16 inches longer), and existing booms can be lengthened by inserting a tube; the mast weight is cut by 5 kg, normally by removing lead fitted below the spreaders. The changes also restrict reinforcement of fibreglass hulls (no adjustable struts), allow zips instead of hanks and two transparent panels in genoas, and ban toestraps, with no part of the crew's body between mid-thigh and feet allowed outboard of the sheer line.

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After a number of years during which Class rules have been somewhat in the doldrums, this year a positive attempt has been made, on the initiative of the BDA, to update the rules and remove some of the anomalous problems that have existed in the past.

As Norbert Geissler of the German Association commented, we changed the Mast rules in 1971 and the Spinnaker design in 1978 – it really is time to now link the weight of the Mast down to actual alloy weight, and the pole up to the minimum length for new spinnaker designs.

The rule changes are as follows:

1. Spinnaker boom

A year ago the French suggested lengthening the Spinnaker pole to some 2.5 metres, but after testing, the new length has been fixed at a maximum of 2,250 mm measured from the 'front face of the mast', an increase of approx. 16 inches. This in itself is unlikely to make any difference to the shape of Spinnakers since the new measurement is still less than half the minimum width of the Spinnaker along its foot. However the new length will make an appreciable difference both to the stability of the boat in heavy weather, while improving the efficiency of the Spinnaker in light. An improvement in performance should also be possible on close reaches.

Action: Borresen tells me there is no need to buy a new boom – simply cut the existing, insert a new tube and rivet to the original halves.

2. Masts

The weight of the mast is being reduced by five kgs., which at present is carried in the form of lead in nearly all alloy masts. In the main this lead is situate in the mast just below the spreaders, so its

removal will not only make handling simpler but more importantly will reduce halliard chafe and also the 'pitching moment' of the mast. This may also help to reduce the number of mast breakages that occur in the gybe.

Action: For Borresen Masts see diagram available from class secretary. For Boyce the lead is either held by screws or rivets which remove; the lead will then fall to the bottom of the mast. It took me ten minutes last Sunday!

3. Reinforcement of Fibre-Glass Hulls

New rules are being introduced to limit the method of reinforcement of fibre-glass hulls which previously was completely open, there being no restrictions.

The effect of the new restrictions is to prevent struts being installed in boats which could then be adjusted. In theory it was thought it might be possible to change the shape of the hull.

4. Genoas

The 'hank' rule has now been amended so as to permit zippers as well. It is thought that this will add approximately £5 to the cost of a new sail, but will obviously make changing the sail a lot easier.

Also the sail rules have been changed so as to permit two transparent panels to be put in a sail, which will be particularly useful for anyone wanting to look at their top tell-tale on the Genoa while up on the weather side.

5. Toestraps

A new rule has been introduced that provides that when sitting the boat out no part of the crew's body between the middle of his/her thigh and his/her feet shall be outboard of the sheer line (the side of the boat). This rule has worked in other classes. Toestraps as such are now banned, although how this part of the new rule is going to be enforced, I don't know.

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