

Playing It By The Rules

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Summary. A practical (not official) guide to four Dragon class rules that crews often misunderstand. Under rule 13.20, half of each crew member's thigh must stay inboard of the sheerline when hiking, so knees near the side of the boat almost certainly break the rule. Mobile phones must be switched fully off while racing (flight mode is not enough) and other GPS devices such as watches and tablets must be left ashore. Rule 6.103 limits mast movement at deck level to 50 mm fore and aft, with no more than 10 mm athwartships clearance each side, and the 285 kg crew-weight limit of rule 13.30 applies at all times unless the Notice of Race removes it or the crew has been officially weighed in.

Sailing is a complex sport, with multiple rules and regulations on and off the water. But there are a number of rules or parts of rules specific to the Dragon Class that crew really need to be aware of when racing. In this article we focus on four areas of the Class rules that may not be understood or which have been the subject of recent discussions. Please note this practical advice is not an official interpretation of the Rule and cannot be relied upon in the Jury Room.

1 Hiking – crew position

The rule states

13.20. The use of any apparatus or contrivance (other than fixed hand holds on the inside face of the cockpit coaming) the purpose of which is to support or assist in supporting a member of the crew outboard or partially outboard is prohibited. *When hiking no part of the crew's body between the middle of the thigh and feet shall be outboard of the sheerline.*

The rule in practice:

Looking at the second part of the rule involving the position of the crew, what does this mean in practice? Of course in heavy airs we all accept it is important to get your weight over the side of the boat. So how far can you go? Well looking at the rule, the first point to agree is – what is the sheerline referring to. In practical terms we are concerned with the point where the top of the outside edge of the hull meets the deck or the deck's extension.

So to comply with the rule, 50% of the crew's thigh must not be outside this point – again that will mean where the underside of the crew's thigh when seated touches the point at which deck and hull meet.

So if your knees are close to the side of the boat it is highly unlikely that you are complying.

2 The use of mobile phones on board

The class rules covering this issue are:

11.11. The following equipment may be on board while racing:

1. VHF Radio which shall only be used in an emergency. The Notice of Race or Sailing Instructions may define additional use (e.g. race management communication) and make the item mandatory onboard.

2. *Mobile phones or similar devices permitting the receiving of any outside information may only be used in an emergency. At all other times during racing the device shall be turned off.*

12. PROHIBITIONS

12.20. *Any devices transmitting or correlating data relative to rig tension or wind direction or speed or boat speed and location, by means such as, but not limited to, electronic, mechanical, hydraulic or pneumatic are prohibited.* Depth sounders may be permitted by an Organising Authority for races within its jurisdiction

In practical terms what does this mean for mobile phones?

The rules are clear, basic mobile phones and similar devices like smartphones can be carried for emergency use but must be turned off whilst racing. But what does turned off mean and what is the situation with watches with GPS function and tablets, etc? Are they illegal under rule 12.20?

The rule requires that:

i) to turn off the phone, if it is a simple mobile phone or a smartphone whilst racing. Do not only use the 'flight mode' function, and

ii) to leave any other devices with a GPS function such as watches, tablets etc on land as they are not 'mobile phones' and therefore are prohibited.

3. Mast movement at deck level

The IDA clarified the situation regarding mast movement at deck level last year and new rules have come into force to ensure that regardless of what mast ram system your boat is fitted with, the ability of the mast to move at deck level is now controlled by the measurements of the hole where the mast goes through the deck.

The new rule states

6.103. A mark (made from metal or plastic plate) 50 mm measured fore and aft and 20 mm athwartships shall be fixed on the deck on each side of the mast opening, in such a position that the foreside of the mast shall not be outside nor be capable of being moved outside the limits of these marks. (see diagram on page 22).

Movement of the mast within these limits shall be restricted by filling pieces or bolts fixed in such a way that they cannot be removed while racing.

Athwartship clearance of more than 10 mm each side is prohibited. Any filling pieces limiting athwartship movement to 10 mm shall be fixed such that they cannot be removed with the mast in place. (Note: Any other filling pieces or chocks do not have to be fixed).

What does this mean in practice?

This means that all owners of boats need to modify the area where the mast goes through the deck so it is not possible for the mast to move more forward or aft other than within the 50 mm metal or plastic plate irrespective of any mast ram or other similar device. Of course this does not apply for new boats which are already fitted out with the filling pieces or bolts required from March 1, 2016.

4 Crew Weight

The rule states

13.30. The total weight of the crew wearing lightweight clothing shall not exceed 285 kg. If a crew has been officially weighed in at the regatta, re-weighing during the regatta shall not take place unless there is a change of crew. The Notice of Race may amend this rule at events other than the World Championships, European Championships, Gold Cups and IDA Grade I regattas.

As the class rule stands the total weight of the crew whilst racing should not exceed 285 kg at any point, regardless of the level of competition, unless:

- i) the requirement to comply with class rule 13.30 has been specifically removed in the issued Notice of Race for that event. If the removal of rule 13.30 is not mentioned in the Notice of Race then the weight limit applies at all times even if you are not weighed in at the regatta, or*
- ii) the Crew have been officially weighed in at the regatta (required for IDA Championships and Grade 1 regattas). In this instance they will not be reweighed during the event.*