

The RYA Portsmouth Yardstick

During 1952, the year Dwight D Eisenhower won a landslide victory for President of the U.S.A. and Mars bars cost 5d, the RYA launched the Portsmouth Yardstick Scheme.

Hitherto the scheme had operated under the guidance of its founder, Sinbad Zillwood Milledge, and been restricted to the clubs of Portsmouth harbour, enabling boats from one club to race against boats of another, on equal terms.

Dinghies in those days weren't quite the same as today. A Firefly was a Firefly and not a Firefly with one or two crew, one or two fore and aft sails, one or two trapezes, or a conventional, asymmetric or no spinnaker. And just as dinghy design has changed over the years, so has the Portsmouth Yardstick Scheme, to keep pace with, or in some cases, stay ahead of, the game.

So what are the main thrusts of change during the early 2000s? Well the main one is that of data collection i.e. the Portsmouth Yardstick Return.

In an endeavour to solve the increasing problem of correctly identifying a specific class, the 2003 Return Form included three extra

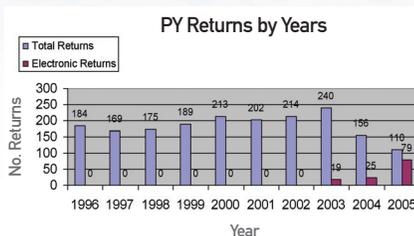
configuration fields – number of persons, rig, and spinnaker type. These fields, primarily intended for dinghy, small multihull and keelboat classes, were in addition to the two existing cruiser fields for keel type and engine and propeller configuration.

Return Data

As three years worth of Return data is used in the annual Number assessment, 2006 is the first year Numbers have been assessed using these

of valid Returns used for Number assessment on a year-on-year basis. For the last three years this is split into the number of paper and electronic Returns. The trend suggested there will be more electronic Returns than paper at the end of this season. This histogram also shows the dangerously low level of club Returns received by the RYA. Everyone involved in PY racing should make efforts to increase these.

The next edition of the electronic Return will include all the current published classes with their varying configurations. This will enable clubs to identify more easily specific classes for which they wish to make a recommendation, and will reduce errors and time. There will also be a section for data on new and un-published classes. This, along with the number of classes being returned, is only made possible as a result of the electronic Return.



configuration fields. This means this year's published Numbers should be more meaningful for the varying configurations of a single class, and clubs should be able to identify these more easily.

Another significant step forward in the way in which the RYA collects Return data was the introduction, also during 2003, of the electronic Return Form. The histogram shows the number

Additional Data Inspection

Whilst on the subject of data assessment, apart from the standard annual RYA Number assessment, from time to time additional inspection of the data is undertaken to test if there is merit in any of the ideas often suggested for the Scheme. One such suggestion is that different Numbers should be published for the same class but sailing on different waters. The analogy often used is the assumed relative performance difference between an Optimist and an Osprey when racing on flat, inland waters compared with when racing in a seaway. The Return form has for many years included a field for clubs to enter their water type and every so often Numbers are analysed against this data. This was last undertaken for three classes earlier this year and the results are shown to the left.

| Class | No. of Boat/races | Water | PN cal | PN pub | Variation |
|-------------|-------------------|---------|---------|--------|-----------|
| Fireball SC | 2929 | Lake | 983.33 | 982 | +1.33 |
| | 450 | Harbour | 982.35 | | +0.35 |
| | 24 | River | 982.00 | | 0 |
| | 753 | Sea | 981.87 | | -0.13 |
| Laser U 0 | 46534 | Lake | 1077.95 | 1078 | -0.05 |
| | 5716 | Harbour | 1078.73 | | +0.73 |
| | 2971 | River | 1081.95 | | +3.95 |
| | 7446 | Sea | 1079.05 | | +1.05 |
| RS 400 S A | 4545 | Lake | 951.26 | 952 | -0.74 |
| | 1820 | Harbour | 952.15 | | +0.15 |
| | 376 | River | 940.69 | | +11.31 |
| | 2444 | Sea | 953.98 | | +1.98 |

For more information on the scheme, including full recommendations of its use and how the RYA assesses the Numbers, visit www.rya.org.uk/KnowledgeBase/technical/pys.htm