

Stories from PHRF of the Chesapeake

PHRF of the Chesapeake, Inc.

P.O. Box 3169
Prince Frederick, MD 20678

Website: www.phrfchesbay.com/

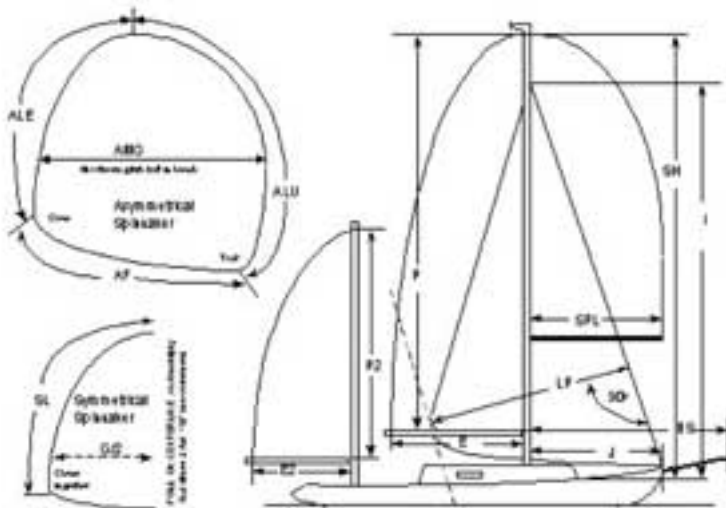
Since 1976, PHRF of the Chesapeake has been actively involved in bringing affordable racing handicaps based on the Performance Handicap Racing Fleet system to the average sailboat racer. Today PHRF is a nationwide standard for cruising class sailboat racing, and the PHRF of the Chesapeake fleet continues today as the largest handicap racing fleet on the Chesapeake Bay.

PHRF OF THE CHESAPEAKE BECOMES NSHOF FOUNDING MEMBER From the President:

"I am proud to announce that the attendees at this year's Annual Board of Delegates Meeting voted unanimously for PHRF of the Chesapeake, Inc. to become a Founding Member of the National Sailing Hall of Fame. We are delighted to become a part of this most worthy endeavor."

Michael W. Dale - PHRF of the Chesapeake

History



Before 1976, cruising yachts on the Chesapeake Bay raced under various handicap measurement rules. Each rule used a formula to predict the potential speed of the yacht compared with the speed of the others. The calculated result was the yacht's rating in equivalent feet. This was used to determine the time allowance handicap. Most measurers charged fees, and the classes charged fees for running the rating calculations. Some of the rules also required the yacht to be lifted out of the water and weighted. This improved measurement accuracy but added to the cost.

When yachts are similar in design, a simple rule with few measurements can be equitable. As

boats vary more widely in their design, a fair rule becomes more complex and difficult to develop, requiring more measurements and becoming more expensive for the owners. Good yacht designers study measurement rules to find ways to design yachts that are fast but appear slow to the rules. To correct the handicaps of such "rule-beaters" requires adjustment of the rule. Most any adjustment affects not only the rule-beater, but all other yachts in the class as well, sometimes unfairly or contrary to the intent of the rule makers...

What was needed was an inexpensive handicapping system that could correct the handicaps of individual rule-beaters without affecting other yachts in the class. The boating industry expanded rapidly during the 70's. Low maintenance fiberglass boats were built by the thousands, hundreds out of the same molds. The number of new sailors racing increased just as rapidly. Many of them came from one-design day sailor fleets. They did not understand the measurement rules and they didn't want to spend a lot of money on ratings. They simply wanted to get out on the water and race. Many of the "old salts" as well were tired of the expense and complication of the measurement rules.

In Southern California a group of yachtsmen developed a new approach to handicapping, and organized the Pacific Handicap Racing Fleet. The British were already using the Portsmouth Yardstick system of handicapping different classes of day sailors to facilitate their racing together. Portsmouth numbers were assigned on the basis of observed performance. Similarly, the Pacific Handicap Racing Fleet assigned handicaps to classes of cruising boats based on observations of actual performance, instead of operating on measurement or design information. They made supplemental use of the same measurements when performance data was not available, but not in a rating formula. The system was inexpensive, easy to administer, and produced ratings quickly. The method of rating yachts became popular and spread to other parts of the country, where "Pacific" in Pacific Handicap Racing Fleet was changed to "Performance" to become Performance Handicap Racing Fleet, which we now know to be PHRF.

In 1975, a Chesapeake sailor, Auzzie Jackson, visited Southern California and became interested in this new and popular handicapping system after picking up a policy book and reading it. He was so enthusiastic that he brought the system home to the Fishing Bay Yacht Club to be used in club racing. The first Chesapeake PHRF system under the patronage of Auzzie and Fred Williams soon spread throughout the Southern Bay and to clubs in the Northern Bay as well. Thereafter it became recognized by CBYRA for High Point competition.

During the late 70's and early 80's the growth of PHRF of the Chesapeake was spectacular and its administration became a big problem. The original file card system, suitable for the small

fleet became inadequate as the class grew from 340 rated sailboats in 1979 to 673 in 1980 to over 1,000 in 1981. In 1981 the management of the class moved from Richmond to Baltimore and computer-based records were established. By 1986, the number of rated sailboats had climbed to more than 1,400, and the vast array of information was loaded onto an IBM DOS based PC system. In 1994, PHRF of the Chesapeake management moved from Baltimore to Easton, MD, and again in 1997 to it's present location in Prince Frederick, MD. In 1997, the IBM DOS system was converted to a MS Access' data base on a Pentium ' processor driven PC system, to make processing applications and valid certificates less time consuming. For 1998, PHRF of the Chesapeake opened it's new web site, which provides information about our organization to all persons with access to the internet. In 1999, 6 sec./mi. was added to the ratings of all boats handicapped by PHRF of the Chesapeake to align the ratings more equally with other regions of PHRF around the country. Also in 1999, fixed propeller credits are allowed, and as well as a new 6P equipment category that allows minimally equipped boats to be eligible for a rating certificate. In 2000 the PHRF Chesapeake data was converted to a relational database system. For 2001, revised guidelines are in effect to more fairly address rating credits for sailboats using roller furling sails and the list of sailboats with valid rating certificates was made available through our web site www.phrfchesbay.com'. For 2002, PHRF of the Chesapeake provides ratings for boats choosing to use both symmetric and asymmetric spinnakers. This policy brings this region more in agreement with policies of other PHRF regions. In 2003, a special event certificate was offered to boats requiring a one-time certificate to participate in races finishing outside the Chesapeake Bay. Beginning in 2004, valid certificates are effective until 31 March of the following year to allow racers to maintain a valid rating throughout the frostbite season. In 2007, PHRF of the Chesapeake Bay initiated a foundation to provide funds to Chesapeake Bay sailors. Beginning in 2008, we updated the safety requirements to better align with the ISAF requirements and the USCG regulations.

At this time, the PHRF database holds records on over 3500 sailboats. The PHRF Executive Secretary, appointed by the President of the association, maintains the PHRF database and performs administrative and clerical tasks necessary for the day to day operation of the association. The Executive Secretary also provides annual renewal forms to members, application forms for prospective members, produces Valid Certificates, updates the web site, and maintains a complete mailing list of members. PHRF administration has truly taken on the proportions of a business and is treated as such.

What began as the Pacific Handicap Racing Fleet in Southern California has become a nation-wide handicapping system, following the overall guidance of the US PHRF committee, under US Sailing. Members of PHRF of the Chesapeake have taken turns serving on the US PHRF committee, providing a continuous presence there for many years. The PHRF handicapping racing fleet, administrated by PHRF of the Chesapeake, continues today as the largest handicap racing fleet on the Chesapeake Bay.

[BACK TO YACHT CLUB STORIES PAGE](#)