

Guidelines for the Etchells E-Series 2010

First, thank you for your willingness to run part of this series. The sailors really appreciate your time.

Preparation

For gear, keep it simple. Use one of the junior sailing marks for the pin end of the starting line/finish line mark. Use a large, orange inflatable for the windward mark. We generally avoid permanent marks, as they restrict the ability to set good start lines and put the course in the best place possible.

The goal is to sail outside the bay. Consult with the fleet captain (Dave Powlison) about this if there are any questions about conditions being appropriate for that.

Harbor start—9:30

It's important that you leave the harbor on time—1 hour before the start. Be sure to check with the fleet captain before heading out. That person will likely have some thoughts about where to best set up the course, etc. You should also arrange to communicate with that person before or after each race on channel 76 (the RC uses channel 72 for general communications with competitors). That person will be your main contact with the fleet, and you can expect that any “final decisions” will come from him or her.

Unless the weather is threatening (thunderstorms, high winds, etc.), head out regardless of the wind velocity. It's tempting to stay ashore when the bay is glassy, but in those conditions, the breeze will occasionally fill in, and you want to be ready to go if that happens. Waiting ashore until the breeze appears will cost too much time. Again, keep in touch with the fleet captain.

It is the responsibility of all the boats to get out there on time. Do recognize, however, that if the wind is light, it will take the fleet some time to get to the broad lake. You might need to tow some boats out and/or have the whaler tow some boats as well. This does not mean that you should postpone the start because one or two boats are still coming out of the mooring area while the rest of the fleet is at the starting area and ready to go. If the majority of the boats are there and ready to go, start the sequence.

Courses

Etchells sail windward-leeward courses. A good, broad-lake course will take around 50-60 minutes to sail. In a good breeze, a 1 mile weather leg (about the distance from C to S (if you need a visual reference) works well. In light air, the legs are about $\frac{1}{2}$ that length, and in medium air, about $\frac{3}{4}$ that length. We usually sail 2, 4, or 6 leg courses, with 2 and 4 as the most common. It's preferable to finish the last race to windward, in which case you would be posting a course with odd numbered legs. The exception to this might be in a dying northerly or southerly breeze. Then, you might choose to stop the race at the southern-most mark to make the return to LCYC easier.

Starting

Try to go with the scheduled start time. Here are some parameters. If the wind is under 3 knots, don't start a race, and even if it's 3-4 knots, don't start a race if the wind is very spotty. In those conditions, you should be in contact with the fleet captain throughout, getting input.

Once you're ready to go, make sure the line is really square. Otherwise, you'll end up with a bunch of boats stacked up at the favored end and set yourself up for a number of general recalls. Have the individual recall flag ready to go and know what you need to do to use it. You must raise the flag and use the appropriate sound signals if there are any boats over early. Attempt to hail them, if you can. Also, don't hesitate to use the general recall flag.

During the Race

If the wind drops below 3 knots for over 10 minutes during a race and, especially if the water looks at all glassy (indicating no wind), abandon the race. No one in the fleet will have any problem with that type of decision. Skiers don't try to ski when there is no snow; the Etchells fleet is not eager to try to sail when there is no wind. You should also abandon the race if there is a significant wind shift. An indicator of this will be if you see the fleet "inverting"—tail enders suddenly become leaders and vice-versa.

If one of the remaining legs become parades, such as one-tack beats, shorten the race at the end of the "parade" leg. If that's not possible and the next leg will also be a parade, abandon the race.

If the wind shifts during the race, use the mark boat to shift the next leg. Don't worry about 5 degree shifts, but if it's approaching 10 degrees, signal a course change and move the next mark. Make sure you're familiar with the protocol for doing that.

Finishing

It's not uncommon for several boats to finish overlapped at the line, so make sure you're in a good position to sight the line. Unlike on Wednesday nights, you do not need to move the committee boat to the opposite end of the line. Boats will finish through the starting line in the opposite way from which they started.

Once all of the boats have rounded the weather mark for the final time, you should be thinking about the location of the weather mark for the next race. The mark boat should be at that mark and ready to move the mark, if necessary, as soon as the last boat has rounded. Then, the mark boat can come quickly come down to the finish line and, once all boats have finished, square the line to the new course. By doing those two things, the next race can be promptly started.

Ideally, the next sequence should be underway around 5 minutes after the last boat has finished. The goal is to minimize the time just sailing around and maximize the amount of time actually spent racing.

Time Limits

The time limit for each race is 1.5 hours. Do not start races after 2pm. If we've not completed a race by 1pm, abandon for the day.

Again, thank you for your efforts in providing quality racing!