

# Lake Norman Keelboat Council

## Performance Handicap Racing Fleet (PHRF) Rating System

**Introduction.** Rating by performance handicap is a method of providing equitable time allowances for sailboats of different designs racing against each other. Numerous systems have been employed. Some were methods of handicapping boats, some handicapped skippers, and some combined both systems. The increased interest in the racing of cruiser/racer type sailboats has produced the Performance Handicap Racing Fleet. Measurement-based rating formulas with the attending rapid changes in boat design have turned many skippers to the performance based handicap system. Performance handicap emerges as the best assurance of continued opportunity to compete fairly against all designs, both new and old. In 1981, USYRU (now US Sailing) recognized PHRF as a full committee under its Offshore Racing Council. PHRF programs are locally administered by rating organizations throughout the United States and elsewhere.

**PHRF Handicaps.** PHRF ratings are boat performance handicaps based on the speed potential of the boat, and are determined to the extent possible by observation of previous boat performance. However, because of the number of boats in PHRF, it is not practical to operate on statistics related to individual boats alone. A broader statistical base is obtained by treating production boats of consistent design and construction as a class. When it is brought to the handicapper's attention that a particular boat differs from its standard class in such a way as to change its speed potential, the handicappers may pull the boat from its class and handicap it individually. Where a class has several boats racing actively, the performance data accumulate rapidly and it is possible to arrive at a fair handicap in a short time. It is the intent of PHRF handicapping that any well equipped, well maintained, and well sailed boat will have an equal opportunity to win. PHRF ratings are not intended to reflect skipper and crew capability. Intensity of competition and the influx of new and aggressive sailors require each skipper to maintain consistently high performance in order to place well. The PHRF rating of an individual boat, expressed in increments of 3 sec/mile, is deducted from elapsed time to produce a corrected time. The higher rating indicates the slower boat. Observations of numerous races show that it is impossible to gauge a boat's potential performance more accurately than this because of the multiple factors involved. Differences in skipper and crew skill represent a much larger factor than 3 sec/mi.

**Boat Design.** The PHRF is an open rule. There are no limitations on ingenuity other than those listed herein. A boat must be a monohull of self righting design with an overall length of at least 20 feet. Boats are assumed to be in compliance with the Standard Sail and Equipment Specifications as approved by the LNKC. Boats which vary from these specifications will have designations indicating the variance and are rated accordingly. Well designed and constructed boats are expected not to be made obsolete by newer designs under PHRF. PHRF does not use formulas to determine handicaps, because any formula once established can be beaten by a clever designer. As faster designs appear, they are handicapped accordingly. Therefore, one of the major attractions of the PHRF system is that older boats can race competitively with the latest designs. PHRF discourages rule beating. If a skipper modifies his boat, PHRF will attempt to compensate for the new potential speed. The use of taller masts, longer spinnaker poles, extra ballast, gutted interiors, or other modifications intended to increase speed is compensated for by the rating assigned.

**Classes.** A base rating is established for each production class, and boats within a class are assumed to be identical for rating purposes. Ratings for boats in the same class will differ only with headsail

size or other specific factors known to affect performance. PHRF normally will assign a class rating to any boat of a design acceptable to its own class association, however one design class rules which limit headsail size, sail materials, or spinnakers do not apply to PHRF unless the boat is rated as a one design class. Deviations from class regulations must be substantive to warrant a non-class rating and boats must declare any deviations from class specifications. It should be understood that although PHRF rates like boats as a class, there is no requirement that a boat meet class rules because PHRF rates all boats individually. PHRF may assign a One Design Rating (ODR) to the one design configuration of a class. Each individual boat which desires to be issued a one design rating must specifically request an ODR. An ODR rating will only be issued to a boat that is of a design that is recognized by US Sailing as a One Design Class and all class restrictions will apply when competing with the ODR rating. A skipper may not change his rating by choosing ODR or non ODR more often than once during the calendar year.

**New Class Boats.** A new boat in an established class is given the rating for that class, except that adjustments may be made for deviations from the class standards. For new classes and one-of-a-kind boats, the rating is determined on the basis of comparison with similar boats with established ratings. Comparison is made considering the type of design and principal dimensions. The rating may be adjusted as performance data becomes available.

**Base Ratings.** PHRF base ratings are made under the following assumptions. Additional requirements and definitions of the variables expressed below are contained in the LNKC Standard Sail and Equipment Specifications. Adjustments are made to the base rating if the boat does not conform to assumptions one through nine.

- (1) Genoa maximum "LP" is 155% of "J"
- (2) Spinnaker or whisker pole maximum length "SPL" is equal to "J"
- (3) Spinnaker hoist "SH" or "AH" is equal to "I"
- (4) Symmetric Spinnaker maximum girth "G" is 180% of "J"
- (5) Symmetric Spinnaker maximum luff "SL" is .95 times the square root of ( $I^2 + J^2$ )
- (6) Asymmetric spinnaker luff length "ALU" shall be between 1.0 and 1.1 times the square root of ( $AH^2 + BS^2$ )
- (7) Asymmetric spinnaker maximum foot length "AF" is 180% of "BS"
- (8) The ratio of asymmetric spinnaker mid girth to foot length "AMG"/"AF" shall be not less than .75
- (9) The boat has a folding or feathering propeller, or a retractable outboard motor
- (10) There are no modifications to the original hull or rig design
- (11) The boat is in racing condition

**Equipment.** PHRF assumes that the boat is equipped to race. It does not attempt to rate a partially equipped boat, or a boat which differs from others in its class, in that it is unusually heavy, out of balance, or has unusual windage (as from a dinghy or davits). However, if the basic hull and rig differ from others in its class, it may be rated uniquely. A skipper may experiment with different ways of improving the performance of his or her boat without the inconvenience of applying for a new rating. However, if there are changes to the hull, rig, sails, or other factors upon which the existing rating is based, they must be reported to the handicapper for evaluation. If possible deviations on the part of another boat become evident other contestants are urged to appeal to the handicapper.

**Auxiliaries.** A boat which carries a valid rating claiming an inboard or outboard auxiliary must carry that auxiliary during every race. For a boat rated with an engine, the boat shall have enough engine and propeller power to move the boat at a speed in knots equal to the square root of her waterline length (LWL) measurement. A boat which has a valid rating issued on the basis of no engine or auxiliary may choose to carry an auxiliary; however no rating change shall be made. A boat may petition the Board of Handicappers for a re-rating, considering the presence of an auxiliary, but no more than once in any calendar year.

**Headsail Size.** Because headsail size has so much to do with boat speed, PHRF uses this characteristic as a rating factor. Boats are rated for use with large or small headsails, with 155% of LP being the dividing line. Once a boat is rated with a large headsail (over 155%) this rating must be used, even though wind conditions may preclude use of the sail. A skipper may not change his rating by choosing a different headsail more often than once during the calendar year.

**Spinnaker or Non-spinnaker.** Boats possessing a valid LNKC spinnaker class rating will use the same rating regardless of whether they race in spinnaker or non-spinnaker classes. The ratings are the same. If spinnaker measurements are not submitted on the rating application, the rating will be issued for non spinnaker competition only. If a boat declares an oversize pole but does not submit spinnaker measurements, the rating will be issued without an adjustment for the pole as the use of oversize poles is prohibited in non-spinnaker classes. A skipper may not change his rating by choosing a spinnaker or non-spinnaker rating more often than once during the calendar year.

**Symmetric and Asymmetric Spinnakers.** LNKC allows boats to be rated to race with a conventional symmetric spinnaker, an asymmetric spinnaker, or both types of spinnakers. Either type of spinnaker may be flown from a movable spinnaker pole attached to the mast, or an asymmetric spinnaker may be tacked to a retractable, movable, or fixed bowsprit. Boats may race with both types of spinnakers. The choice of symmetric, asymmetric, or both types of spinnakers will be made at time of application for a spinnaker class rating and may be changed once during the calendar year.

**Courses.** The PHRF rating system can be used for all types of courses. An objective evaluation of a well prepared and well sailed boat's performance on the various courses run on Lake Norman will yield a fair rating that can be used in all events conducted on the Lake.

**Board of Handicappers.** Ratings are determined by a Board of Handicappers that will consist of two (2) handicappers from each LNKC member club. One member of the Board of Handicappers will be appointed as Chief Handicapper. The Chief Handicapper acts as chairman. With time, the handicappers become familiar with the performance of the active boats and are able to evaluate their characteristics. Through experience, the handicappers become familiar with the Lake Norman wind conditions and understand how much of an allowance to make for conditions before evaluating boat speed in competition. Handicappers maintain a constant search for boats which require an adjustment

of handicap in order to permit them to compete fairly with the balance of the fleet. Handicappers are selected on the basis of an active interest in handicap racing, knowledge of boat design and performance, a judicial temperament, and demonstrated leadership in sailboat racing. Those who are active participants in racing have put aside their primary interests as contestants to evaluate boats fairly and accurately. Clearly, the system rests on the integrity of the handicappers. The names and club affiliation of the members of the Board of Handicappers as well as contact information can be found on the LNKC web site at [www.lnkc.com](http://www.lnkc.com).

**Application for Ratings.** Any owner or skipper of a boat requiring a rating shall apply to the Chief Handicapper using the form available at [www.lnkc.com](http://www.lnkc.com). The hull, rig and sail measurements as reported on the rating application form are critical to the establishment of the PHRF rating. The responsibility for supplying accurate measurements rests solely with the owner of the boat. Although builder-supplied information can and should be consulted, particularly with regard to hull measurements, considerable variances between sailboats of the same model can be possible. Variances in rig and spinnaker pole dimensions are quite common, which could result in the rating being declared invalid if the owner supplied incorrect information. Accurate measurements of the largest headsail and largest symmetrical and/or asymmetrical spinnaker to be used are required to obtain a rating, as well as a declaration as to how the sail measurements were obtained.

**Valid List.** The Valid List is the official list of current handicaps of all boats rated by the Board of Handicappers. It is kept current throughout the year and is posted at [www.lnkc.com](http://www.lnkc.com).

**How Ratings Are Used.** The rating to be used in a race is the rating in effect on the day of the first race for that event. Each applicant receives a Valid Certificate giving the current rating for the boat, and the Valid Certificate is evidence of a valid rating. Valid Certificates are issued without expiration dates, however a rating will be retired from the Valid List when it is determined that the boat is no longer being raced at Lake Norman by the certificate holder. Ratings may be adjusted by the Board of Handicappers at any time. It is the obligation of each entrant to declare the latest valid rating when entering a race. Only boats with current PHRF ratings may enter PHRF races. This is necessary even for class boats. Race committees are requested to refuse entry to boats not listed on the most recent Valid List, unless the skipper can produce a more recent Valid Certificate or proof of a provisional rating by the Chief Handicapper, or has been issued a single event rating.

**Single Event Ratings.** Single Event Rating Certificates may be issued to boats competing in races at Lake Norman. Certificates from other areas of the country will not be valid for events being conducted under LNKC PHRF handicapping guidelines and policies. Single Event Rating Certificates will be issued by the Chief Handicapper or a host club handicapper and will be valid for only that single event.

**Appeals.** Formal appeals of ratings are made to the Chief Handicapper and are considered in appeals meetings to be conducted no less often than twice each year in February and August. Rating appeals shall be submitted no later than January 31 for consideration at the February meeting and July 31 for consideration at the August meeting. A skipper may appeal his or her boat's rating or that of another boat. Appellants set forth their views in writing, and document their case with supporting information. Appeals must be submitted on the Rating Appeal Form available at [www.lnkc.com](http://www.lnkc.com). The identity of the person appealing another boat's rating will be held in confidence. A skipper appealing his or her boat's rating or whose boat's rating has been appealed will be promptly notified of the time and place of the appeal meeting, and will be given the opportunity to present relevant information at the meeting. The deliberations of the Board will be open to the Board members only.

**Race Results.** Race results are acknowledged to provide data that can be a useful tool in handicapping. These results are used by PHRF to flag a potential misaligned rating of a particular boat class. This does not mean that because a particular boat does well, the rating will be changed. However, if the race results indicate a trend in that boat class, the Board of Handicappers will review the rating of that class.

**Conclusion.** We hope you will enjoy racing in this open and competitive sport. The system is being refined constantly. You have the opportunity to play an important part in shaping the future for this kind of racing, not only by sailing competitively, but also by taking an active role in the management of PHRF.

Associated Program Documents:

- Standard Sail and Equipment Specifications
- Board of Handicappers Policies
- PHRF Rating Request Form
- Rating Appeal Form

This program shall become effective on the later of date of approval or March 1, 2008.

Approved by the Lake Norman Keelboat Council Board of Directors on February 2, 2008