

# Protest Validity

When it comes to protesting an incident that occurs during a race, there are a number of steps a competitor must take for a protest to be considered valid when it gets before a protest committee for determination. Some of the required steps occur on the water and others back onshore when actually submitting the protest. Each of these aspects is covered here.

## On the Water

First up, on the water, if you feel you've been infringed against and may want to take it further you **must** hail '**PROTEST**' immediately so the other party hears it and has an opportunity to absolve themselves. Word such as 'do your turns' will not cut it! Secondly, if your boat length is greater than 6 metres you must display a red protest flag at the first reasonable opportunity, unless there are extenuating circumstances (see RRS 60.2). Under normal circumstances, World Sailing considers 20 seconds to be the outside. With a keelboat, you should have your protest flag to hand in the cockpit when you are racing. If someone has to go below, rummage in a drawer to find it and it takes you 2 minutes to display your protest flag, then it's very likely when the protest gets to a hearing it will be deemed invalid.

Just because you've hailed 'Protest' and displayed your protest flag (if appropriate) does not mean you have to go ahead with it when you get ashore. If the boat that infringed against you, unless there is damage, has taken a penalty then you can generally forget about it at this stage.

## Once You Get Ashore

Once you get ashore, if you are going to proceed with a protest it **must** be submitted **in writing** within the time limit specified in the Sailing Instructions. If no time limit is specified in the Sailing Instructions then under the RRS it is 2 hours from when the last boat finishes the race. For other protests it is 2 hours from when the protestor becomes aware of the situation. The Safety Beach Keelboat Sailing Instructions have a 2 hour time limit after the last boat in the Division finishes. The OTB Sailing Instructions are 90 minutes after the last boat in the Division finishes.

The basic contents for a valid protest are as follows:

- The protestor and protestee,
- The incident,
- Where and when the incident occurred,
- The name of the protestor's representative.

This does **not** need to be on an official Protest Form. So long as it is in writing it can be on a piece of toilet paper, in an e-mail, in a text message or any other form of written communication and lodged within the time limit (see RRS 60.3).

In the case of OTB protests at a club event, this would most likely be written on a piece of paper. And in the absence of the race committee being back at the club or anyone being in the Tower, it could be handed to the OTB Captain. There *are* Protest Forms in the Tower.

With keelboats, submitting a protest within the time limit may be a bit more problematic though not impossible. In some cases, it may be possible to submit the protest whilst still racing if you're sufficiently tech savvy. Probably the best method (if you can't get back to the club) is to send the details to the keelboat e-mail address clearly stating that it is a Protest and include all the basic contents listed above. The e-mail will be date and time stamped when it is received, so that will cover the issue of when it was received regardless of when it is actually read by someone. Also remember, it does not need to be the skipper or owner who lodges the protest, so one of the crew could bring a written protest back to the club after racing if the skipper or owner are unable to.

Some of the above is being reviewed and will be specified differently in the Sailing Instructions for next season, where appropriate.