HOW ARE HANDICAPS DETERMINED?

Boat Yardsticks

Boat yardsticks are determined by Australia Sailing and are to be found published on their website
https://www.sailingresources.org.au/class-assoc/yardsticks-chb-handicap/

BHSA uses Catamaran yardsticks that vary a little from those published, our variations being provided by the relevant Australia Sailing authority. These variations apply only to our club races and are possible because catamaran yardsticks are calculated (largely) by the Small Catamaran Handicap Rating System (SCHRS) formula (see the AS explanation on their website). The SCHRS calculated handicaps are annually checked against race performance results, so are considered very reliable. In particular the SCHRS calculation enables us to allow for variations from standard boat configurations, such as the effect on yardstick of not using trapeze, of single-handed crews and of overweight crews. The published yardsticks take into account variations in hull construction and sail details, so our own variations are in addition to those.

Unfortunately for monohull sailors there are no equivalent methods for calculating boat yardsticks and these are purely performance based (ie. averaged regatta race results) so we have no means for allowing for variations from those published.

Personal or Skipper yardsticks

How does our handicapping system work? The methodology was defined by the VYC for determining a personal "yardstick" based on a skipper's racing performance relative to other skippers. The better the skipper, the closer is their yardstick (or personal handicap) to their boat yardstick, so a scratch skipper's handicap will be the same as that of her boat.

The calculation averages recent performances to give a "back calculated yardstick", and BHSA averages the best three performances of the most recent five races. Other clubs may take the average of the best five of the last eight races.

How is that performance measured? Once the results of a race have been reduced (or calculated) then a yardstick is calculated for each skipper that would have resulted (had they had that yardstick) of all skippers having equal corrected time on handicap. This is printed in our results in the column "Y'stick=Time".

The principle for personal handicapping is that the winner earns a reduced handicap while the slow earn a longer handicap, and by taking into account recent *best* results we avoid being too influenced by good or bad luck in any race.

The difficulty for the handicapper is to maintain a relevant standard by which performance is measured. A club that has several Olympic class sailors competing can fairly easily maintain a measure representing

a "scratch" sailor and hence measure the relevant performance of others. BHSA has several good sailors whose performances guide our handicapping, but since handicapping must be one of relatives our measures may well be thrown should we recruit some international champions.

In a large fleet the corrected time used as the race standard is that of the 4th or 5th place getter, but BHSA fleets are too small for any such specific rule and the handicapper must use judgement in selecting the specific time employed as the race standard. This may be the 3rd placegetter or the winner (when the winner is regarded as a reliable "standard candle"), or a time somewhere between these. When the process is done by rote it has been found that personal handicaps all tend to stretch out, which is undesirable and unrealistic. Thus the handicapper's task is to maintain relative standards which recognise changes in the skills of any particular member whilst not allowing the apparent average performance of the club to run away.

BHSA limits a skipper's personal handicap to the range between 98% and 130% of boat yardstick, so irrespective of the Y'stick=Time calculated in any particular race the figure entered in the back calculation is within those limits. It might seem surprising that a club without Olympic champions can assign anyone a yardstick lower than scratch, but it is all relative and helps to stop the "numbers running away".