

## The Future of Big Boat Handicapping for 2023

When I first started handicapping Big Boats in Hong Kong in 2008, the software being used for HKPN dating back to 1997 was rapidly becoming obsolete. To ensure the sustainability of HKPN, there were attempts to write our own software, create high-level excel spreadsheets and even find off-the-shelf software packages that would work for handicapping but nothing came to fruition. Ultimately, what has evolved is a labour-intensive, time-consuming handicapping process after nigh on every race which needed bringing into a new technological era.

Last year, the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club began to investigate the use of SailSys, a race management programme that could provide data collection to support the Club's reports for the Public Recreational Lease. Embedded in the SailSys software is a handicapping functionality that appeared to offer a path to sustainable handicapping for our Big Boat fleet of the likes I'd never seen before. Popular in Australia, Sailsys was the marriage of software engineers and sailors with John Maclurcan, essentially the grandfather of performance handicapping in Australia since the 80s, creating a dynamic race management and handicapping platform.

Nobody likes change, but SailSys was introduced to the five major Sailing Clubs and Associations of Hong Kong and was very positively received. Trials have been completed and I am delighted to say that all our clubs will adopt SailSys as their race management platform going forward over the coming months. How that is done, is very much up to the clubs but to those who have raced under HKPN for so many years, it is a good time for me to explain some of the changes that will occur.

First, let me reassure you that SailSys is essentially an automated version of HKPN. It is not going to change your ability to have a fair handicap nor reduce your chances of winning a race using your handicap. When you read SailSys, think HKPN! The RHKYC is introducing SailSys for the forthcoming Autumn Regatta, HHYC will soon decide from when they will use SailSys. The ABC will use SailSys for the Waglan Series with DBYC and the COA also committing to the transition. For the next couple of months, the HKPN list will be updated as normal and be available as an alternative to SailSys until all clubs and associations have made the transition to this new race management platform.

I am in a process of creating an HKSF interclub handicapping committee comprising a representative from each of our clubs and associations and over the coming months there will be guidelines created for the clubs to follow. Each club will have an element of control of the handicapping for their events going forward with the handicapping committee available for guidance and oversight. They will also be able to review handicaps if needed. Some of the key aspects of SailSys handicapping are:

- The algorithms for handicap change will not be published so handicaps will be much harder to manipulate.
- Handicaps will be in the format of a TCF ie 1.0123 rather than the HKPN format of 1230.

- Races that are deemed unsuitable for handicapping due to conditions will be ignored objectively by algorithms rather than subjectively as with HKPN.
- Handicap change will be tied to a series. For example, if a boat races in the HHYC Typhoon Series and the Summer Saturday Series, results from one series will not affect the other.
- Unique series like the RHKYC Rum Series will use a boat's last previous Rum Series handicap lending itself to much tighter results, earlier in a series.
- Dual handicapping for IRC divisions can be easily accommodated.
- Handicaps can change after each race if a club so wishes. The RHKYC may update handicaps between race days for the forthcoming Autumn Regatta resulting in tighter results after the first day of racing.
- Boats no longer need to apply for a handicap. These will be allocated in accordance with a clubs Notice of Race when a series commences.

It has been a huge challenge bringing together 5 Clubs and associations with their respective Sailing Committee's and Sailing Offices and I am especially grateful for the support that has helped effect this change. There will be teething problems, I am sure, but going forward I am confident that this change to SailSys will create a platform for sustainable yacht handicapping for the years ahead.

Please take a look at the SailSys website at <https://www.sailsys.com.au>. The email address [racehkpn@gmail.com](mailto:racehkpn@gmail.com) remains available for questions that you might have.

Regards

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