

## Sail-World.com News

### 2011 ISAF Sailing World Championships - Perth 2011

### 2012 London Olympic Games

#### Television coverage of Olympic Sailing - a way forward

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'Ben Ainslie, Finn - ISAF Sailing World Championships Perth 2011' © Richard Langdon/Skandia Team GBR [Click Here to view large photo](#)

#### **In an incident that grabbed headlines worldwide, Britain's King of Sailing - Ben Ainslie reacted poorly to perceived interference by a television boat on the Finn dinghy course at the 2011 ISAF World Sailing Championships.**

Post race, the triple Olympic Gold medallist acted in a way that did nothing but tarnish his crown. He sailed his dinghy over the television boat and grabbed the driver and there was a confrontation.

The International Jury applied a heavy penalty for this serious Rule 69 offence for bringing the sport of sailing into disrepute. Ainslie was heavily penalised with two race disqualifications and that blew him out of the World Championship and it seem he may face an RYA hearing, with possible ISAF bans from some future sailing events.

To date evidence is yet to show that the television boat caused any interference. Indeed Skip Lissiman; the Perth 2011 Competition Manager, has stated categorically that the television boat did not affect the outcome of the race.

It seems that not everyone has absorbed the fact that the television boat involved in the incident was not a maverick general media boat laden with yachting photographers but the official ISAF contracted Sunset + Vine APP boat, the only media boat allowed inside the race course.

ISAF has sanctioned and in fact encouraged, a television camera presence on the racecourse and

has changed the race rules at World Sailing Cup events, at ISAF World Championships and at the Olympic Games to facilitate this.

So regardless of the outcome of the Ainslie matter, the presence of the official television media boat or helicopter in or over the field of play is worthy of examination.

Normally during sailing events RRS 62 allows sailors redress for interference by media boats, helicopters etc. but this no longer applies to Olympic Medal races and now to World Championships and World Sailing Cups.

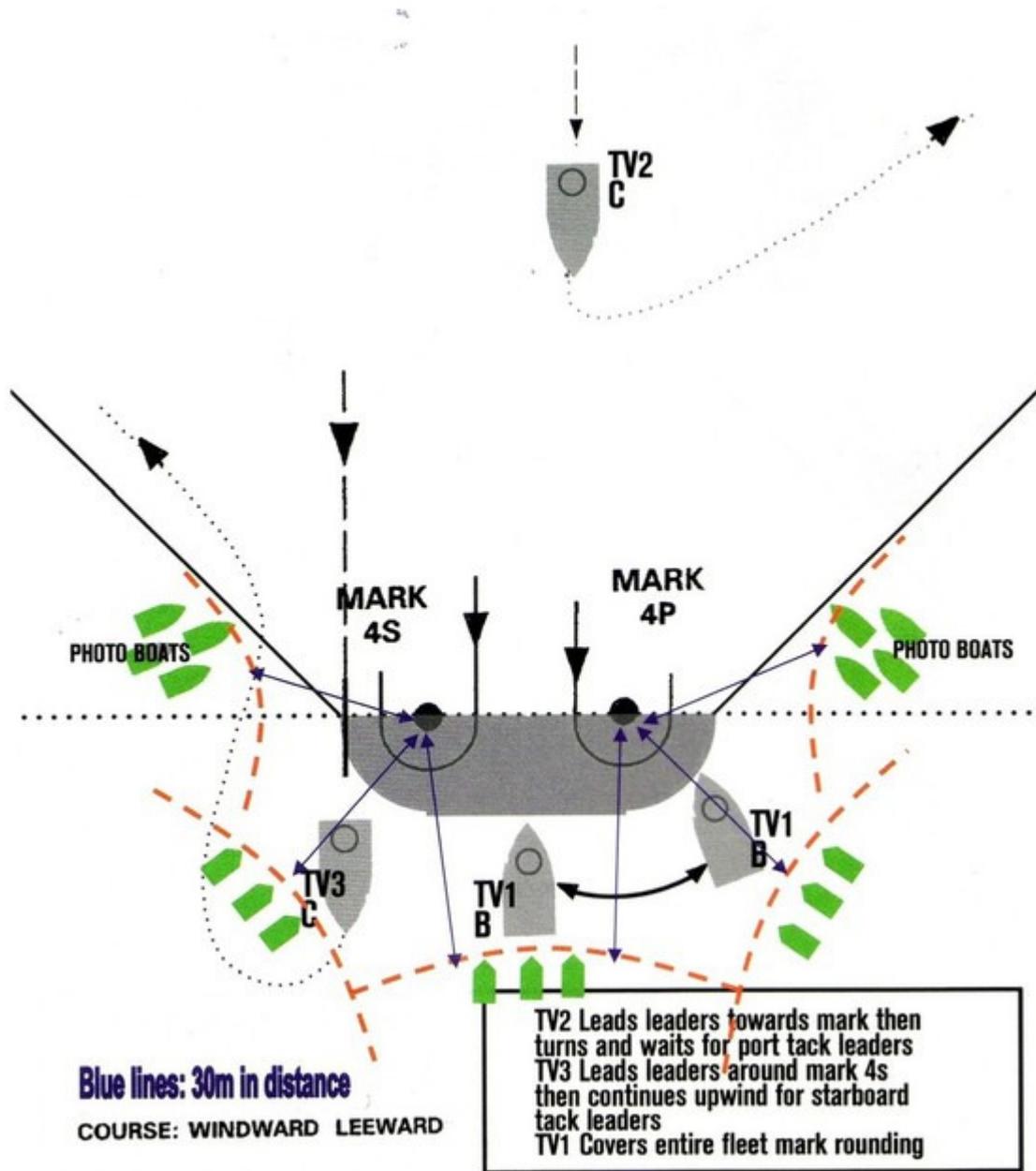
The reason is that the International Olympic Commission wants a situation whereby, at that at the end of an event, the audience knows who has won the event (whatever sport it maybe) and that all medals are decided on the field of play.

ISAF Race Management policies have therefore been put in place to enable this, including the removal of RR62 redress, approved by the ISAF Council.

The 2011 ISAF World Championship Sailing Instructions Rule 15.2 states: 'Actions by official boats or helicopters shall not be grounds for requesting redress by a boat. This changes RRS 62.'

Given these are the rules of the Olympic Games, sailors have to cope with those rules.

However it's clear that ISAF will be now considering what further can be done to reduce the impact of cameras on and over the racecourse.



Positions of working boats including TV and Media - one of many positioning diagrams used for the Qingdao Olympic Sailing regatta which allowed Media and Competitors to work together - [Click Here to view large photo](#)

There is no place for having power boats pulling wake in the middle of an Olympic sailing course, any more than there is for having cameraman on the field in a game of football, or driving in cars ahead of the athletes in the Olympic stadium.

The TV directors have to accept that there will be some limitations on getting the perfect shot one hundred percent of the time. Its part of their art and skill to be able to work around this, and it is not a solution to load up the racecourse with more and more cameras, boats, cost and wake.

Helicopters with their massive low level drowndraft should surely be banned to locations downwind of the competitors - and it is easy for these to be tracked by course marshals using GPS. A race or regatta ban for infringement by the pilot would have the desired effect.

Shortcomings in the coverage should be able to be covered by land based, or fixed location on the water based cameras and maybe a new element introduced with the use of Go-Pro type cameras located and transmitting from onboard the competitors boats as mast cams, bow cams and stern cams and possibly even slung under helium balloons above the course, as the innovative RS:X class

has been trialling.

Looking ahead Phil Jones, the CEO of Yachting Australia, who was the Chairman of the Olympic Commission, is amongst those examining what needs to be done to get a balance between the fairest possible racing and exciting vision.

Jones said 'Currently (in the case of interference which would affect the outcome of the race) the Principal Race Officer can abandon the race and have it re-sailed. That works for the person interfered with, coming say third but perhaps not the person leading clear ahead on the last leg to the finish.'



TV cameras all in a row, in the Olympic Marina - [Richard Gladwell](#) [Click Here to view large photo](#)

Tim Sewell, head of the ISAF Media unit said this week 'Sailing can be a very exciting television sport; our task is to ensure that we get the balance right and we need to look at all aspects of the situation.'

Here are just some questions that have been raised over recent days.

'In Medal races, should the official television boat be just a locally available RIB, ploughing along producing significant wake or should it be a wave-piercing catamaran, which will produce minimum wake? (Wave-piercing catamarans have been used routinely by camera crews getting close to the action in Australian east coast sailing events – they are out on the water in both light and heavy conditions.)

Is it reasonable for ISAF and the contractor to allow a local volunteer to be in the critical role of television camera boat driver? This is a specialist role, just as important as that of the cameraman.

Rather than just the PRO, should there be a dedicated International Juror, possibly on the television boat or at least on the water, in radio contact with the television boat or helicopter to keep them from causing any impediment to the competitors?

We expect this discussion will continue apace, but trust the 2012 Olympic Sailing Regatta organisers will be themselves looking at these issues in coming months.

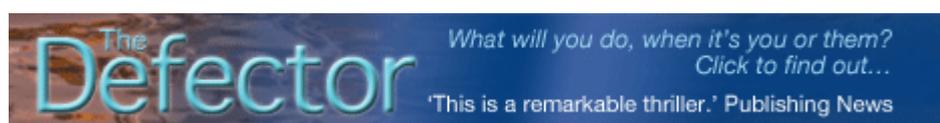


Qingdao Olympic Regatta 2008. Don't look back! (It's only a broadcast camera). Qingdao Olympic Regatta 2008. Percy and Simpson (GBR) negotiate the spectator chop after claiming gold in the medal race. - [Guy Nowell ©](#) [Click Here to view large photo](#)



Qingdao Olympic Regatta 2008. Up close and personal - the aerial camera ball. - Laurie Gilbert [Click Here to view large photo](#)

by Rob Kothe & the Sail-World Team



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