



Mendota Yacht Club

Madison, Wisconsin USA

Est: 1903

Tips for boats assisting Mendota Yacht Club races and regattas

c. Leigh Leonard, 2011

The Mendota Yacht Club welcomes spectators to come on out and watch the most exciting sailboat racing you will find anywhere. As long as you are out there, you may wonder how you can help. This fact sheet offers some tips for spectator boats that want to assist racers and race officials as needed.

General

- ⇒ **What you can expect.** Sailboats race on a windward-leeward course marked with orange buoys. The first leg of the racecourse is always upwind. The race begins on an imaginary line between the race committee boat and another orange mark, the leeward mark. The race committee is responsible for running the races and setting the course. Usually, there will be more than one race committee boat on the course. You can always find one by looking for the yellow or blue “RC” flag. If you have questions, ask a member of the race committee.
- ⇒ **How to maneuver around the racecourse.** Sailors generally love to have spectators around the racecourse. Please keep in mind that some sailboats are extremely sensitive to motorboat waves. In light air, you can actually change the outcome of a race by passing too close.
- ⇒ **What to bring.** Your camera, a cooler with some water, sunscreen and VHF radio if you have one.
- ⇒ **Communications.** The Race Committee uses VHF channel 78A to communicate with competitors. Do not communicate with a competitor by radio unless they have requested assistance because they will be disqualified from the race.
- ⇒ **How you can help.**
 - A capsized sailboat not usually a life-threatening emergency. Sailors know what to do and will often rescue themselves.
 - If someone looks like they need help because they’ve capsized head in their direction and wait. If they need help, they’ll ask for it.

Assisting a Capsized Sailboat

- ⇒ A capsized sailboat not usually a life-threatening emergency. Sailors know what to do and will often rescue themselves.
- ⇒ In general, approach a capsized sailboat from the downwind side to avoid drifting down on them.
- ⇒ **Do not get too close** to the capsized sailboat until you have the skipper's permission. If the boat was racing when it capsized, assisting them will disqualify them from the race. Many sailors will make at least one or two attempts to right the boat and sail it dry by themselves before accepting assistance.
- ⇒ Once they've asked for your help, get anyone who is hypothermic out of the water and into your boat right away.
- ⇒ When sailboats capsize all kinds of gear begins to float away. Assuming that all the sailors are safe, do what you can to collect any coolers, water bottles and other items that are beginning to drift downwind.
- ⇒ A capsized sailboat, especially one that has turned turtle (upside down) can be hard for other rescue boats to spot. If you stand by the capsized boat you'll make it easier for other rescue boats to find the capsized boat.
- ⇒ Don't worry about towing or attempting to right a capsized boat. Leave that to experienced rescue boats.
- ⇒ If you do not feel comfortable approaching and the sailors seem to need help, notify the Race Committee.
- ⇒ Don't leave the capsized boat until other help arrives.
- ⇒ **If you need more help**, use your VHF radio to call:
 - MYC Race Committee- Channel 78A: "MYC Race Committee, MYC Race Committee, MYC Race Committee" followed by the name of your boat.
 - U. W. Lifesaving Service-Channel 16: "UW Tower, UW Tower, UW Tower" followed by the name of your boat. Or use your phone: 262-5865.

Other Helpful Things To Do

- ⇒ **Tow boats to and from the race course.** Some sailors will have an extremely long sail home after racing. If the wind is light (less than 5 mph) they will likely be delighted with the offer of a tow home. At the beginning of the day you can also offer to tow boats out to the race course, especially if they appear to be getting a late start.