

**Subject:** Review of Dragon's Breath Committee Boat experiment and the comments received to the questionnaire

On August 10, 2006, I sent the following questionnaire: ...

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### I am looking for your input ...

At the Dragon's Breath Race last weekend, I tried something new.

Last winter I attended an Ensign Regatta in Florida wherein the Race Committee was very 'vocal' on the radio .. they announced which fleet was about to start their sequence and when (seconds to go) and lots of countdowns during the sequence. There was NO WAY anyone would not know where they stood as far as timing is concerned. At first I did not like it, as a purist, but it grew on me as the 3 days went on. So I decided to experiment on you this weekend.

A few have passed a comment or two. I would like to poll all people who were there so as to get a consensus. I will either continue this in the future or abandon it based on your feelings.

Please advise where you stand ..... My feelings won't be hurt.

If you know someone's e-mail address that I have not included and who was skippering a boat at the regatta, please forward this to them.

Thanks for your help,

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The answers to this questionnaire were distributed the following week and posted on the website. A few more came in later and were added to the website on Sept 11th. If you did not see these responses, go to the ODC website ([www.OrientalDinghyClub.com](http://www.OrientalDinghyClub.com)) and under "Race Results" you will see the link to the survey next to the Dragon's Breath results. The later additions start with the last item at the bottom of page 6. This response will also be posted in the same place.

A straight numerical count of your feelings is as follows (31 replies):

Highly in favor:	20	65%
Plus & Minus:	6	19%
Negative:	5	16%

I am pleased that so many liked my attempt to communicate more. I was rather surprised to learn that the approach is being used in other significant regattas .. even some J-24 regattas, the NOOD events, Block Island Race Week and the NYCRA off shore event. As I said in my original questionnaire, I did not like it in Florida but after 3 days it really grew on me.

Please allow me a little self defense: Some of the negative responses said that radio instructions could / should not deviate from the written race instructions. These comments could be construed as meaning that I did deviate from R/I's. To the very best of my knowledge I NEVER deviated from the Race Instructions. The R/I's were available on the website for a month before the event and were reviewed at the skipper's meeting. The R/I's specifically stated:

**12. RADIO:** The Race Committee will monitor VHF channels 16 and 72. Special notices will be broadcast on Channel 72. Starting sequences and changes will be broadcast on CH 72.

Obviously the starting sequences were authorized by this R/I paragraph. If you didn't have a radio you still could get the info in the traditional manner: via the pennants and course board. At the skipper's meeting I stated that I would be VERY vocal. Obviously the VHF is required to hear me.

There was only one error that I will admit too. One boat called me well after many had already finished. His basic question was 'where am I supposed to finish...' I did respond "upwind" after determining that his class finished upwind. Technically I should not have responded to that question since it was giving unfair advantage to that boat. In actuality, most, if not all, of his fleet had already finished and he was obviously a newer racer.

The negative responses all came from seasoned racers. I thought one comment was of particular noteworthiness and has great validity. He mentioned that in a recent Scuttlebutt several PRO's talked about problems where someone had a stuck open mike which totally wiped out their intended VHF communications.

Based on these responses I think I would run future regattas as follows:

1. On one-design events where all participants should be well in tune with how the event is being run and all proper procedures, I would announce any course information and do a count down to the warning. I would not give any more count downs after that.
2. On a club PHRF event, I would announce the course and announce that the next flag will happen in advance ... e.g: 'The Warning will occur in ten seconds" ... "The Prep will be in 10 seconds" ... "the Prep flag will be lowered in 10 seconds" .. and, lastly, the start will be in 10 seconds. I would stop giving the actual count down to each flag except that I would I would try to count down to the warning.
3. In a 'major multi-class' event, such as the Dragon's Breath, I would continue to announce the planned starting sequence for the next race, the course(s) for each class, and I would announce before each warning that 'The next class to start will be the such-and-such class running the xyz course'. I would do the same count downs as stated in #2 above.

As to the concern that an open mike may override the committee boat communications, all boats in that class would be subject to the same problem. Everything then falls back to all boats being responsible to observe the course designations on the committee boat and the pennants being flown at that moment. I would have to remember to state in the Race Instructions that any countdowns are redundant (to the course board & pennants) and is only an aid and not to be relied upon. Just like the horn is an aid but when it fails or is not heard, the pennants are what count.

Thank you all for participating in my questionnaire and, of course, in attending our event. Should you have any more to add to this subject, I am open to your comments.

Regards,

Bill Kirsch