

Introduction to sailing

What is sailing? Sailing is about freedom, dynamics, tactics, technique, natural elements and teamwork. A good sailor knows how to play the waves, gusts of wind, wind shifts, currents and the tactical game with the other competitors. Sailing does not only require physical strength, but also an understanding of how to sail your boat as fast as possible. That is why many competitive sailors spend a lot of time on the water as well as on shore working on their boat. You can see that in the harbour of International Sailing Centre Medemblik during the Delta Lloyd Regatta.

The basics of sailing are easy to understand. All boats of one discipline start at the same time and sail around the course (marked with buoys). The first boat that passes the finish line, wins the race and scores 1 point, the second boat scores 2 points, etceteras. After several races, spread out over various days, the points will be added and the boat with the lowest number of points wins the event. The 10 best qualified sailors will sail a medal race. This is a short race close to shore with umpires on the water. The result of the medal race counts twice and is not discardable. The results of the series counts as well.

Start

Before actually starting, the competitors are given three preparation signals (at 5 and 4 minutes and at 1 minute) before they may cross the starting line; which is an imaginary line between two flags on committee vessels. During this preparation time the boats will search for the best position at the starting line. This best position depends on the wind and the fleet around the competitor. For example, if a competitor expects the wind to change a few minutes after the start to the left, he wants to make sure that at the final starting signal, he is on the left side of the starting line.

The race itself

As mentioned before, tactics are very important during races. The rules, wind direction, current (on the ocean) and other competitors, are all taken into account when a competitor decides its tactic. Sailors have to watch their opponents continuously. Teams will follow their

own strategy, but will also respond to a manoeuvre made by their opponents in front of or behind them.

The wind direction is of great influence on the tactics as well. Since one cannot sail against the wind, there must always be a certain angle (approximately 45° to the wind) between the sail and the wind direction. As a result, boats may not go straight to the upwind mark (top buoy). A team will in that case be forced to sail under the right angle as much upwind as possible. And after a while they can tack (turn to the other side) to get closer to the mark. It may take several tacks to get to the mark. Also, the wind direction and force will change several times so that a tactic has to be adjusted continuously.

Nautical definitions

Main sail	Biggest sail on board
Jib	Small sail in front of the main sail
Spinnaker	A third bulging sail in front of the boat (470, 49-er, Yngling and Tornado)
Bow	Front side of the boat
Port-side	Left side of the boat, while watching the bow
Starboard	Right side of the boat, while watching the bow
Upwind from	The course closest to where the wind is coming from
Downwind	A sailing course with the wind straight from behind
Reaching	A sailing course with the wind not completely straight from behind, but with an angle.
Tack	Changing direction from upwind course to upwind course. In other words, the boat turns with the bow through the wind.

Gibe	Changing direction from reaching to reaching. In other words, the boat turns with the bow away from the wind.
Weather-side	The side where the wind is coming from
Leeward	The side where the wind is blowing to