

A change has come.

Upon reading the accompanying letters, it is quite apparent that a situation has developed with the IHCA and the Hobie Cat Co. regarding the NAHCA's practice of permitting the participation of boats other than Hobie Cats at Hobie Cat regattas. This presents a difficult situation for the NAHCA and for me as chairman.

As a regional body of the International Hobie Class Association (IHCA), NAHCA must comply with the IHCA class rules and constitution. Additionally we receive substantial financial support from the Hobie Cat Co., without which we would be hard pressed to continue providing the services to which our members have become accustomed. With these facts in mind, it is not a question of whether we will comply with the wishes of the IHCA but how we will go about doing so.

The NAHCA officers are fully aware of the different situations around the region regarding the open class issue. This subject has been debated for some time. The class officers and I have held some long discussions with the IHCA and the Hobie Cat Co. on this issue and we know this is going to be painful for some regions, and yet a non-issue for others.

For some time I have heard arguments regarding fleets in which more than half of the fleet members, including the commodore, do not own Hobie Cat boats and the majority of the boats at their regattas are not Hobie Cat boats. For these groups the solution is apparent. These fleets will need to reconsider whether their organization is a Hobie Cat fleet in name only or a catamaran club. Similarly these fleets will need to reconsider how they will be running future Hobie Cat regattas.

In the dinghy world there are class-sponsored events and there are invitational events. Using the Laser class as an example. There are Laser events, which are sanctioned by the class association. At these events you will see Lasers and only Lasers competing. In comparison many yacht clubs offer dinghy regattas, at these regattas Lasers may be one of several dinghy classes invited to participate. I believe this is the direction we will now be moving as well.

The Hobie class will continue to sanction regattas throughout the North American region through the division and fleet structure. To be a sanctioned regatta the host will have to comply with IHCA class rules and constitution. Specifically, non-Hobie Cat boats will not be able to participate in Hobie class sanctioned regattas. Organizations that run events, which include non-Hobie Cat boats, simply will not be running a Hobie class sanctioned event. Additionally these organizations will no longer be able to utilize the Hobie Cat name, the NAHCA name or Hobie Cat trademark in their Notice of Race or event advertising. In short, these events will no longer be considered "Hobie Cat" regattas. Organizations that elect to organize an open invitation regatta rather than a "Hobie Cat" regatta are no longer required to follow the Hobie class standardized racing program and all we can say is that we wish you well. Alternatively if an organization

chooses to offer a "Hobie Cat" regatta, the Hobie class and the Hobie Cat Co. will continue to do all we can in offering our support to you and the event. We have some successful and popular programs available and we are continuing to pursue other avenues of event support, such as our new insurance program. Our class has been successful by offering a standardized one-design racing program and we will continue this in the future.

Is there a happy medium? Can a Hobie fleet continue to exist within a larger organization? Sure and there are plenty of examples of how this can work. In many cases Hobie fleets exist within a yacht club or other organization. This is entirely appropriate and does not need to change at all.

We know this will be a painful decision for some. We fully understand that the Hobie class will lose some events and likely some members over this issue. While we will be a slightly smaller organization we will be an organization more focused on our mission of promoting Hobie Cat sailing. This is a mission we are going to pursue with vigor to foster the sport of Hobie Cat sailing. In recent years, the Hobie class has become more mainstream with respect to the rest of yachting world. We are becoming more involved with all the national sailing authorities in North America as well as ISAF. The level of professional race management offered at our premier events is second to none. We recently had a professionally run championship event with 70 boats. How many other sailing classes can offer that?

The IHCA has agreed to give us one year to make the necessary changes to be in compliance with the class rules. The IHCA agreed to this as we have been in this situation for some time and it is unreasonable to expect it to go away overnight. For 2004 we will continue to operate in a manner similar to past years but under the following IHCA directive (as stated in the accompanying letter from the IHCA):

- *Open Class boats permitted to participate under a phase out program will be restricted only to boats that have previously participated in a Hobie event prior to August 1, 2003 i.e Only Skipper and boat combinations that were raced in Hobie events prior to August 1, 2003 will be permitted to race in any 2004 Hobie event.*
- *No new Open Class boats will be permitted to participate.*
- *Skippers of all Open Class boats eligible and desiring to participate in this phase out program will be required to obtain IHCA or Regional Annual Membership for 2004.*

The IHCA and the Hobie Cat Co. are expecting us to be in full compliance with regard to this issue after January 1, 2005.

If you are thinking of switching to a Hobie Cat, please also know that in 2004 we will make every effort to make loaner or charter boats available. If you are interested in sailing at a regatta please contact your Division Chair and dealer in advance.

Sincerely,

Hobie Class Assoc. Chair