



Wrap up and Proof of Concept Report

Wrap up Report

Event Summary

The Caribbean Ocean Racing Club successfully hosted the inaugural Windward 500. Excellent offshore racing conditions allowed competitive racers to beat predictions and finish in less than three days. Racers adapted well to sailing instructions for remote starting, racing through waypoint gates, and remote finishes. Competitors meet stringent health, customs, and immigration requirements of their home port and the Islands whose water they sailed through.

Virtual meeting platforms allowed the Organizing Authority and Race Officials to engage all appropriate international resources and develop the event to World Sailing standards. Skippers attended the briefing simultaneously in three of the Windward Islands and with the OA in Barbados, PRO in Annapolis Maryland, International Judges in St. Thomas USVI, CSA Chief Measurer in Trinidad, and OA/RC Desk Officers in four of the course Islands. It was otherwise a traditional Skippers Briefing. The PRO and Chief Judge reminded competitors to keep their YB Trackers and AIS transponders on throughout the race for safety and tracking purposes and mentioned various nuances particular to the rules in the Sailing Instructions for this race. Brief Q&As followed, and once adjourned, attendees went off to celebrate that their preparations for the race were complete.

With GPS Waypoint Start/Finish and Course Gates set, the race started at 10:00 Monday, May 17th, 2021. Soon after, an announcement was made over the RC (WhatsApp) Channel "The PRO is happy to report that there will be NO starting penalties necessary."

OA/RC Desk Officers monitored progress over YB Tracker, AIS Apps and received a GPS Fix over a Competitor's (WhatsApp) Channel as boats passed through each course gate. Racers maintained a log of each fix's date, time, latitude, and longitude for submission to RC after finishing. The PRO signaled line honors over the RC (WhatsApp) Channel with a "HONK." In this first year of the Windward 500, the OA/RC Desk Officers maintained similar logs for each boat and submitted them for reconciliation with boat logs, confirming that all was in good order.

The OA designed the course locating the waypoint gates within one nautical mile of land at each island, ensuring cell phone coverage for competitors approaching to pass through the gates. This allowed position fixes to be conveniently sent to OA/RC Desk Officers at each island in a timely manner. In addition, YB Tracking established Geo-fences at each Finish Line, resulting in the Date/Time of Finish instantaneously captured and relayed to [YachtScoring.com](https://www.yachtscoring.com).

Prevailing winds of between 15 to 18 knots blew directly out of the east and provided competitors with an enviable racecourse. The sea state was reasonably comfortable, as was expected for this time of year. The exception being the passage around Kick'um Jenny, which traditionally has confused seas during peak tidal changes. There were no known or reported safety issues, and all experienced a comfortable and fast ride around the race course this year.



Spectators enjoyed watching their boat on the YB Tracker and cheered for them over event and open social media sites. Besides posting Fixes, competitors posted photos and videos, some of which were relayed to Sailors for the Sea by Oceana. Sponsors enjoyed live worldwide visibility on the YB Tracking platform during the event.

Prizegiving was virtual and focused on Giving. Windward 500 expenses were paid by kind contributions from Caribbean Ocean Racing Club members, concessionary competitor entry fees, and a Sponsor who picked up the costs for YB Tracker rentals. All concerned gave generously of their time to plan, administer, and participate in the event.

Competitors were recognized for supporting the low-carbon footprint and limited environmental impact aspects of the event. All were recognised for bringing focus to the Marine Industry as an active sector of our burgeoning Blue Economies. In keeping with the virtual nature of the event, podium finishers received and were thrilled with digital Windward 500 certificates, accepted next year as waivers of entry fees for the 2022 Windward 500.

The Measurer reviewed leg by leg performance using CSA's mixed mono/multihull experimental ratings. This proved interesting and lifted the spirits of podium finishers even further. Each now have bragging rights for having had won one or two legs of the inaugural Windward 500. The experiences of the OA, RC, and proud competitors continue to circulate on social media and in regional and international press.

The novel race format, online race administration, and virtual meetings delivered Hope to sailing enthusiasts. We will emerge from these challenging times and strive to be "Faster, Higher, Stronger" in our sport and in our endeavors to be good stewards of, and to enjoy the seas of the Windward Islands. The Caribbean Ocean Racing Club is grateful for guidance and support from all who participated one way or the other in the inaugural running of the 2021 Windward 500. Thank you.

Proof of Concept

Introduction

The Caribbean Ocean Racing Club presents the Windward 500 as proof that variant events can contribute to the diversity and work alongside premier offshore races and regattas in the Caribbean. The Windward 500's novel race format, including experimental rules and ratings, virtual race management, and remote competitor reporting, is also a race with a purpose.

The Windward 500 was born of the necessity to get sailors in the Caribbean racing following the COVID-19 pandemic-related disruption of the region's 2020 and 2021 racing seasons. The eruption of La Soufriere Volcano was devastating for our neighbors in St. Vincent and imperiled the 2021 racing season in the Windward Islands even further. These extreme challenges, coupled with sustainability initiatives, gave the CORC incentive to design, manage and execute an event that required hope and diligence by all concerned. The Organizing Authority then convened to examine all aspects of sportsmanship and social responsibility, research, develop, and apply the appropriate safety, competitiveness, and sustainability aspects to an inaugural offshore racing event.

Regional Sailing Associations, and International Ocean Racing Clubs

The Organizing Authority reached out to regional sailing association for formal recognition and to make contributions to support the sustainability of these important associations.

- A. *The Caribbean Ocean Racing Club is recognized as an Affiliate Organization of the Barbados Sailing Association, an Affiliate Organization of the St Vincent and the Grenadines Sailing Association, and an Annual Regional Regatta Member with the Caribbean Sailing Association.*
- B. *The Caribbean Ocean Racing Club is recognized as the Organizing Authority for the 2021 Windward 500 by the Barbados Sailing Association, Grenada Sailing Association. St. Vincent and the Grenadines Sailing Association and the Saint Lucia Sailing Association.*

The Organizing Authority made contact with two premiere International Ocean Racing Clubs. Members of the OA competed in the StormTriSail Club 2019 Pineapple Cup and the RORC 2020 Caribbean 600. The Race Teams from these Clubs offered general guidance on technical matters and enthusiastic encouragement to the Windward 500 Organizing Authority.

Support from Regional Jurisdictional Authorities

The novelty of starting and finishing at your home port island of Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Martinique or Barbados, and sailing the same 500 mile course round the Windwards required appreciation for the sovereignty of each Island, and their common goal to advance the benefits of the Marine Industry and Blue Economy in the region.



Ministries and Medical Offices kindly provided support and clear guidance to competitors from their Island, and to those passing through their Island's waters during the race. The support was gracious as represented in the following quote from (A) the Government of Barbados Permanent Secretary, and (B) the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Permanent Secretary.

- A. *The Ministry of Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy welcomes and supports this innovative and unique venture which coincides with the objective for a resilient and sustainable blue economy. In fact, your theme "the race for a cleaner future" speaks boldly to this aim.*

- B. *The Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Sustainable Development and Culture supports this initiative which coincides with the Ministry's efforts to revitalize the yachting sector in the face of insurmountable challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Support from Race Teams and Race Officials

The CORC Race Team recognizes the efforts that others have gone to to develop offshore racing in the region and elsewhere round the world. It sought guidance from the Race Teams at Royal Ocean Racing Club and Storm TrySail Club. These inputs informed the OA as the Windward 500 race format was developed and the Notice of Race prepared and published.

The OA reached out to World Sailing Race Officials to set up the race committee and jury. Ruth Miller, IJ US Virgin Islands, with years of service to the Grenada Sailing Festival accepted the position of Chief Judge. Ruth set up an international Jury with IJs from the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Venezuela and a National Judge from Saint Lucia. Ruth also introduced the OA to Sandy Grosvenor, IRO USA and Sandy accepted the position of Principal Race Officer. Bastien Pouthier, CSA Chief Measurer joined the team and coordinated measurements for competitors in various islands. Scoring was coordinated and provided through Luiz Kahl's YachtScoring.com. Bernadette Bradley, together with the technical team at YB Tracking, provided tracking services which are critical to keeping spectators and sponsors engaged in offshore racing.

The Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions invoked a wide array of World Sailing documents including: Racing Rules of Sailing, Offshore Special Regulations, Guidance on Racing Around Waypoints, Appendix WP - Rules for Racing Around Waypoints, Appendix RV - Reduced Visibility Racing Rules, and Appendix LG - Sailing Instruction Guide. The PRO made good use of all, incorporating what was required to ensure a modern, safe and competitive offshore race.

While there were no protests or requests for redress for the International Jury to hear, they did provide timely and professional review of race documents and fielded questions from competitors both before and after the event. The CSA Chief Measurer provided exceptional leg by leg analysis which will allow returning competitors to fine tune sail plans and tactics in coming years.

Closing Comments

Competitors, Race Officials, Spectators, Partners, Authorities and Sponsors all contributed to the efforts required to establish the Windward 500 as a competitive and sustainable event.

As we begin to emerge from the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, we must recognize that the limitations to travel as sport did not stop us, it just gave us the chance to create and participate in an offshore race concept that has been proven. See you next year...

*Competitors Comment in a WhatsApp hail to the Race Committee immediately after the race:
"Thanks for a fun event. I think this counts well as proof of concept"*