

Article 1.3R

Handicap systems around the world

- Worldwide, a variety of ad hoc, past performance measures and formula based approaches have been tried, but no unique solution to the problem has been found.
- Largely empirical based systems include the US PHRF (Performance Handicap Racing Fleet), HN (Handicap Nationale, France), LYS (Leading Yardstick System, Scandinavia). Some of these systems have been replaced in recent years by a hybrid of empirical and velocity prediction methods.
- In France, the HN system was introduced in the 1970s but was partially replaced in 2015. The FFVoile (French Sailing Federation) introduced the Osiris system which uses a velocity prediction programme (VPP) to adjust the now obsolete HN numbers or to calculate a new rating for boats that do not have an existing HN number.
- The Scandinavian LYS has taken a similar route to HN in that it has been replaced by the Swedish Rating System (SRS) which is part empirical and part based on velocity prediction.
- ECHO (Ireland) retains its empirical practices but also makes use of the ratings of IRC Ireland.
- The International ORC (Offshore Racing Council) has a rating system based on VPP, which generates a performance indicator for a given course in given weather conditions.
- VPP calculations generally require a significant set of detailed measurement data – well beyond the basics. There is usually a fee involved, the ratings are generally time limited and, as mentioned above, may be race/weather specific.
- The Portsmouth Number lists for yachts, produced by the RYA, has been favoured by British sailing clubs for many years and, as noted in Article 1.2, is a purely empirical system. However, the lack of sufficient data for a fast growing range of yachts meant that the RYA came to struggle for some years to maintain useful listings. The RYA now only maintains Portsmouth Number lists for dinghies.
- An empirical system depends critically on sufficient appropriate data and this is a significant problem for the ever increasing range of boats weekend racing in the UK. A formula based approach that requires relatively easy to obtain data and which carries no cost or significant lead time is what my work is all about.