

1) Introduction

All “senior” race officers are expected to help “junior” race officers both when they work together, and when “junior” race officers seek advice. This informal type of mentoring can extend over a considerable period of time and involve a variety of events and venues. There is also the formal situation in which a “senior” race officer is officially acting as a mentor. The following deals only with the formal situation.

2) Why Mentoring

Apart from the obvious educational benefits, there are several reasons for a formal mentoring program:

- It provides an opportunity for a “junior” race officer to conduct a regatta knowing that there is a “safety net” in place should problems arise. Some race officers are reluctant to take on the responsibility of conducting more complex events for fear that their lack of experience will be a factor. Having a mentor will help give such a race officer the confidence to try new situations, especially in new venues.
- It provides a club or other host organizing authority an opportunity to give a local race officer an opportunity to take part in their event, while still meeting the requirements of the provincial or national authority. For example, both Ontario Sailing and the CYA have policies that only race officers at specified levels of certification can conduct their championship events. Mentoring provides an opportunity to meet both organization’s needs, and at the same time improve the quality of race officers.

3) Formal Mentoring Requirements

Before any formal mentoring takes place, it needs to be understood by both parties (the Mentor, and the Mentee) exactly what the rules are. These need to be agreed to before the regatta takes place. Having a jurisdictional dispute during an event is not helpful.

- The basic premise of the mentoring exercise should be “this is the Mentee’s event, go run it, and don’t expect any advice from the Mentor, unless you ask for it”. The Mentor has every expectation that the Mentee will perform satisfactorily. The Mentor should not serve in a significant position on the race committee (such as line judge for a large fleet, or as a mark setter). Their role is as an observer. This is an opportunity for the Mentee to demonstrate that they can lead a race committee in the running of an event at this level of complexity, and the Mentor has every expectation that they will succeed.
- It should be clearly understood, however, that the Mentor has the ultimate authority for conducting the event. If sometime during the regatta, the Mentor feels compelled to intervene, or in the worst case step in and take over, the Mentee will have accepted that possibility beforehand. With this authority, the Mentor also accepts the responsibility for any critical problems that should arise.
- It is agreed by both the Mentor and the Mentee, that this is an educational exercise, and that the Mentor will review the performance of the Mentee, in private, at the conclusion of the event. A written assessment will be provided to the Mentee. This assessment will document any significant intervention that the Mentor was required to take, both the strengths and weaknesses (if any) of the Mentee, and suggest possible areas for improvement. The Mentor will also indicate whether or not the Mentee can legitimately claim credit for the success of the event, or did the Mentors actions (if any) significantly affect the outcome of the regatta.

If all of the forgoing are not completely agreed to, well in advance of the event, the Mentor should decline to serve as a formal mentor, and the appropriate authority should be advised of this as soon as possible. In some circumstances, this may require that the Mentor serve as the race officer to fulfill any certification requirements of the sanctioning authority.