

## Pursuit Racing 101

Most people who race in PHRF (Performance Handicap Racing Fleet) have a basic understanding of how races are handicapped. Their boat is rated as to its potential speed under a variety of conditions- this information is distilled into a number that rates this speed in seconds per mile. For example, if one boat rates 99 and another rates 102, the 99 boat is considered to be 3 seconds per mile faster than the 102 boat. A race between these two boats is 'handicapped' by 'giving' 3 seconds per mile to the slower boat. In a typical 20 mile race where both the 99 and the 102 boats start at the same time, the faster boat must finish more than 60 seconds ahead of the slower boat in order to be considered the winner of the race.

The great majority of PHRF racing is in exactly that format. A class of boats with different ratings start together, times are taken at the finish, handicaps applied, and a 'corrected' finishing order established. With larger groups of boats racing, the boats are grouped into classes or divisions with other boats that have ratings as close to one another as is practical.

Then there is 'pursuit' racing. In pursuit racing the mileage of the course is precalculated, all the boats racing are handicapped to determine how much time any one boat would 'owe' another over that course and- rather than start all at once and figure out the corrections after the finish- the corrections are built into each boat's starting time. So, if we were to hold a two boat pursuit race with our 99 boat and 102 boat- in a 20 mile pursuit race- the 102 boat would start 60 seconds before the 99 boat. The faster 99 boat then 'pursues' the slower 102 boat to try to make up its handicap. Whichever boat crosses the finish line first wins the race. So, even though your boat is grouped into a class or division for scoring and awards purposes- in pursuit racing you still start on your own time. There may be several possible starting times for your boat in a particular race- depending on which course is chosen by the race committee on the day of the race. For example, in the Flip Flop Regatta there are 2 possible course lengths (and therefore two possible start times for your boat). In the Figawi Race there

are seven possible courses (and therefore seven possible starting times for your boat).

Again, in either Flip Flop or Figawi, as long as the race goes its scheduled length the first boat to finish in its division or class wins its division or class. It is important to note, however, that this changes if the race does not run its entire scheduled length. If a pursuit race is shortened for any reason (no wind, too much wind, etc.) the handicap that was originally built into your start time will no longer properly determine the winner at the new finish line. For example, in the case of our 99 and 102 boats, if a race was originally to be 20 miles and the 102 boat started 60 seconds before the 99 boat- then the race was shortened to 10 miles- the 102 boat would have been given 30 seconds too much handicap for the 10 mile race that actually occurred. In the case of a shortening, the race committee takes times at the new finish line, determines what handicap actually applies for that length race, and deducts the handicap already given at the start to determine which boat 'corrects out' to be the winner. In the case of our 99 and 102 boat, the 99 boat now only owes the 102 boat 30 seconds instead of 60 seconds. So, instead of the 102 boat having to simply beat the 99 boat across the finish line to win, the 102 boat must cross the new finish line more than 30 seconds ahead in order to win. Essentially, a shortened pursuit race becomes a combination of a standard PHRF race and a pursuit PHRF race- some of the handicap is applied to the start time, some calculated after the finish.

Two things are critical to being scored properly at Flip Flop or Figawi:

1. Stay out of the start area till 5 minutes before your scheduled start time. With so many boats starting at different times the race committee does not have the time to sort boats that are about to start from boats that are just cruising around the start line. If your boat is in the start area previous to 5 minutes before your start you may be disqualified from the race.
2. Make sure you have proper sail numbers AND THAT THEY MATCH YOUR REGISTRATION. Boats with no sail numbers or improper sail numbers will not be scored.