

The Ontario Sailing Race Committee Guidelines indicate that: *"Under normal circumstances, start lines should be set square to the wind. When there is a slight variation to the wind (normal), the pin may be favoured, but by no more than 5°."*

They go on to say: *"There may be exceptional circumstances, in which current or other factors will encourage competitors to favour a particular side of the course. When faced with these unusual conditions, the Race Officer always has the prerogative to bias the line to "encourage the fleet to make use of the whole line".*

The authority for these guidelines can be found in three places:

1. ISAF - The ISAF Race Management Manual says:

8.4.3 Line bias

"It is customary to lay a starting line with approximately 5° of bias favouring the port end. The right-angled wind vane for line setting may be so constructed as to include a sight with this bias. The purpose of the bias is to encourage the fleet to make use of the whole line instead of just the starboard end. Too much bias may lead to congestion at the port end as boats compete with each other to take advantage of it. The Race Officer should observe how the fleet reacts to the bias on his first starting line and adjust as required for subsequent starts.

This requires the bias on the first start to be accurately set and known."

2. CYA - The manual for the CYA Mark Setting Course "The Art & Science of Mark Setting", says:

"When setting a Start Line, there are a number of factors that must be considered. The angle of the wind is the most obvious, but other things such as current or an otherwise favoured side must be accounted for. In the end, there is only one test of a square Start Line: are the boats evenly distributed along the line? The competitors may be aggressive and early, or cautious and late, but if they are evenly spread along the line, there is no favoured end, and the Race Committee has done its job."

3. ILCA-NA - Guidelines For Championship Regattas - 1.10 Guidelines For Starts, says:

"In large fleets it is inevitable that there will be at least a few general recalls during a regatta. it can be due to an overly aggressive fleet pushing the line just a little too hard. More commonly the fleet has perceived some advantage to starting near one end of the line or the other, which does not always have to be due to a bias in the start line (e.g. perhaps there is significant current relief on one side of the course).

A pile up of boats at one end is best dealt with by adjusting the start line to spread the boats out more evenly. As a general rule of thumb, if around 80% of the fleet is populating one half of the line (and a general recall results), then the line should be adjusted."