

2014 Fireball Nationals Survey

Following the 2014 Fireball nationals, we conducted a basic survey to understand competitors impression of certain areas of the event. These have been compiled into this document, and all comments added at the end.

We had 53 replies to the survey (crews as well as helms were invited to reply) - apologies if somehow you have missed the survey - please feel free to add your own comments by way of an email to the committee.

We have received 53 replies.

41 boats replied

33 Helms replied

20 Crews replied

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Fireball Nationals 2014 Questionnaire

Is this your first nationals?

Yes	9	17%
No	44	83%

We sailed 2 types of courses - 1: triangle first and 3: sausage first.

What would you like to see in next years courses?

1	11	21%
3	0	0
Combination	41	79%

We specified a windward finish so that the last race of the day would finish as close to the beach as possible.

If the wind had been on shore, we may not have used this option.

In future, even if a windward finish means that we finish further from the beach, would you like to see it used (some teams feel that they lose places downwind or upwind, and that a mix of finishing positions helps make this fairer).

In this instance, the additional distance back to the beach would be downwind.

Mix	37	71%
Closest to beach	15	29%

We introduced the gate at the bottom of the run. Do you think this should be present?

Always	31	60%
Never	10	19%
Only if Sausage first	11	21%

How many races a day would you like to do?

1	3	6%
2	46	88%
3	3	6%

What kind of starts would you like to see?

Line Only	7	13%
Gate Only	9	17%
Mix	36	69%

Race length. There was some debate after 4 races in breeze (so, the result may have been biased).

How long do you think the races should be?

45 mins	14	27%
60 mins	9	17%
75 mins	0	0%
Vary	29	56%

The race length should vary depending on the conditions:

45 minutes if the conditions are poor (windy, cold, wet)

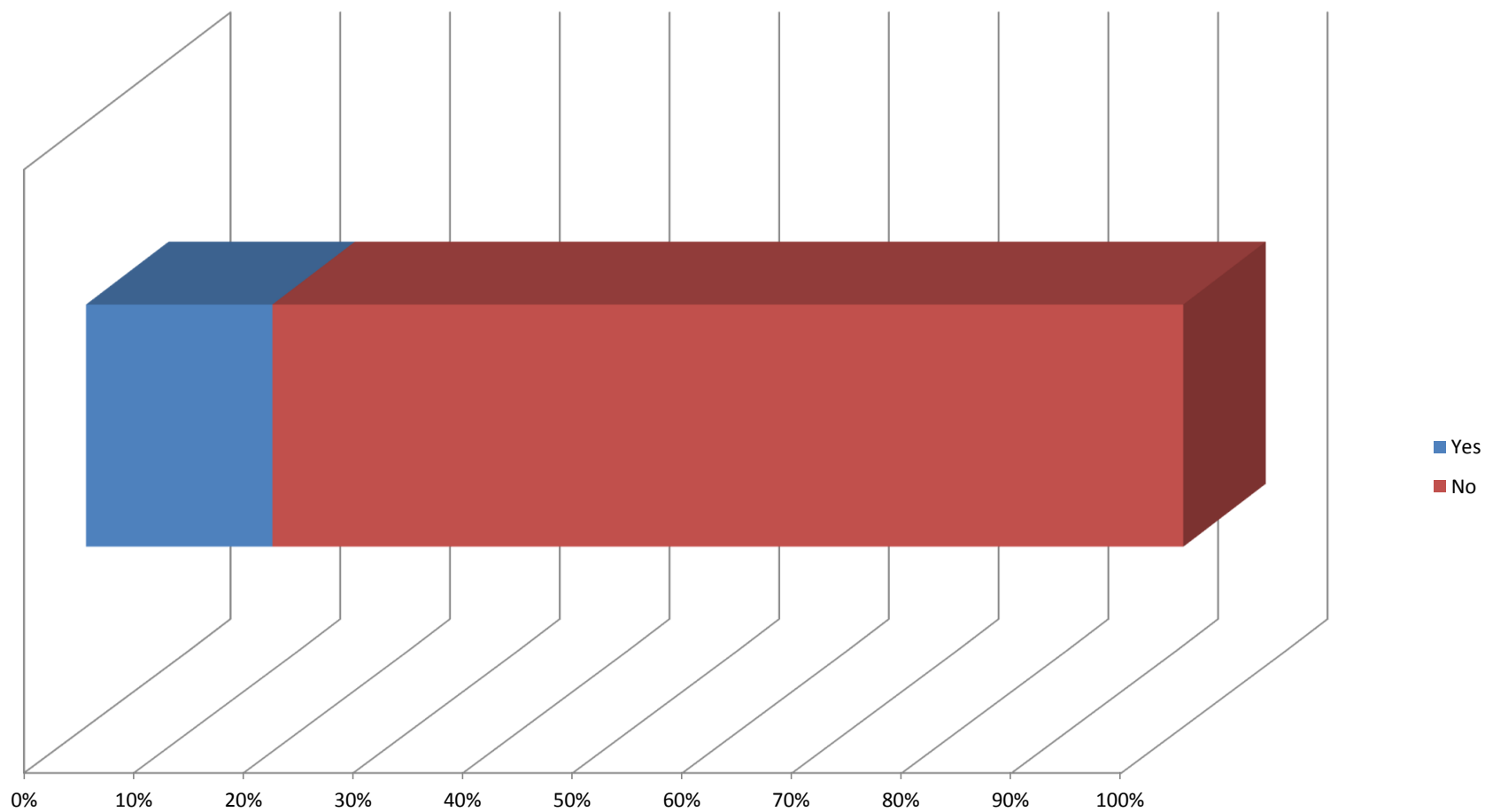
60 minutes if the conditions are good (warm, sunny, breezy)

75 minutes if the conditions are 'outstanding'

Daily prize giving - do you think this is at the correct time?

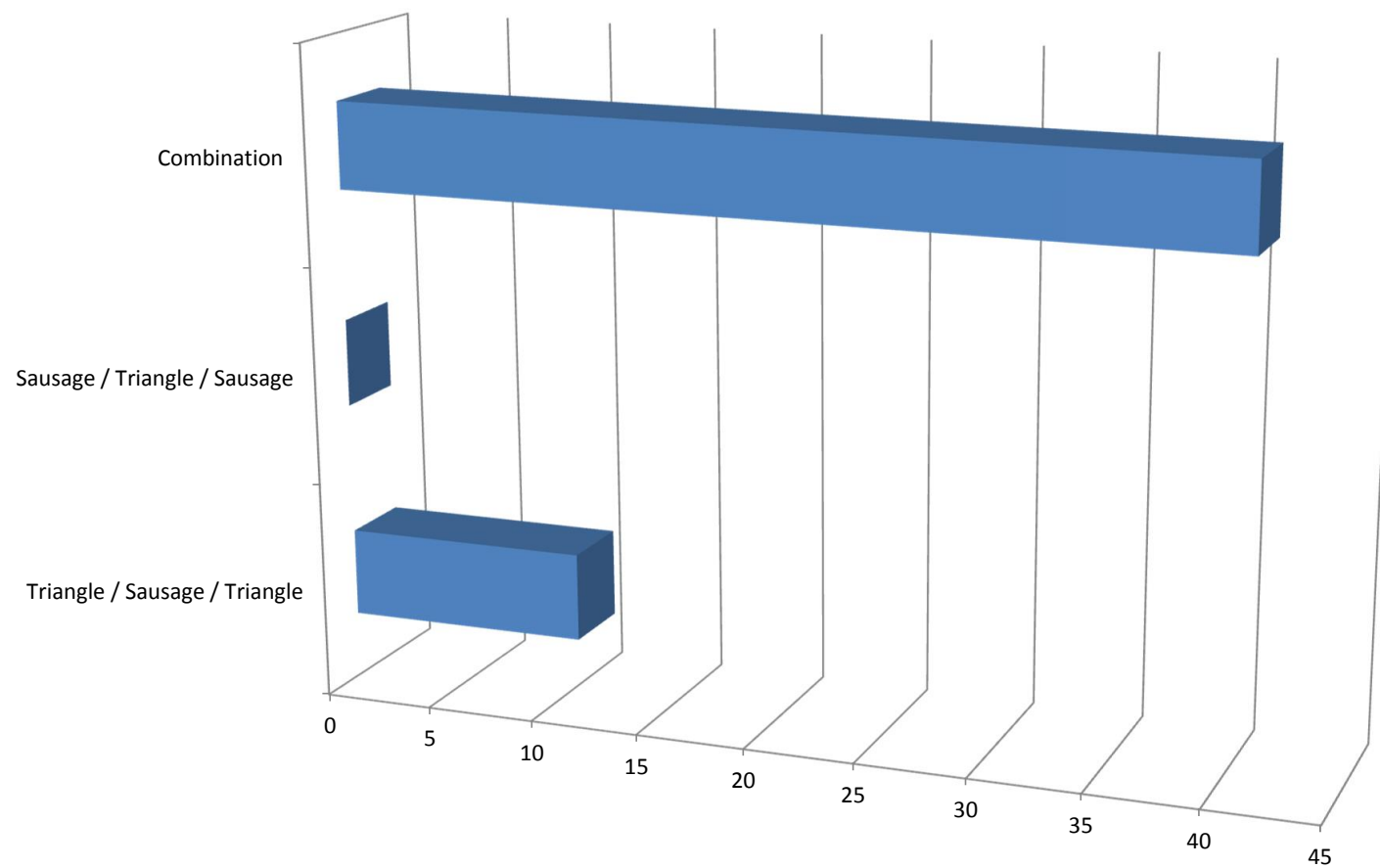
Yes (9pm)	42	81%
No - Other	10	19%

Is this your first nationals?



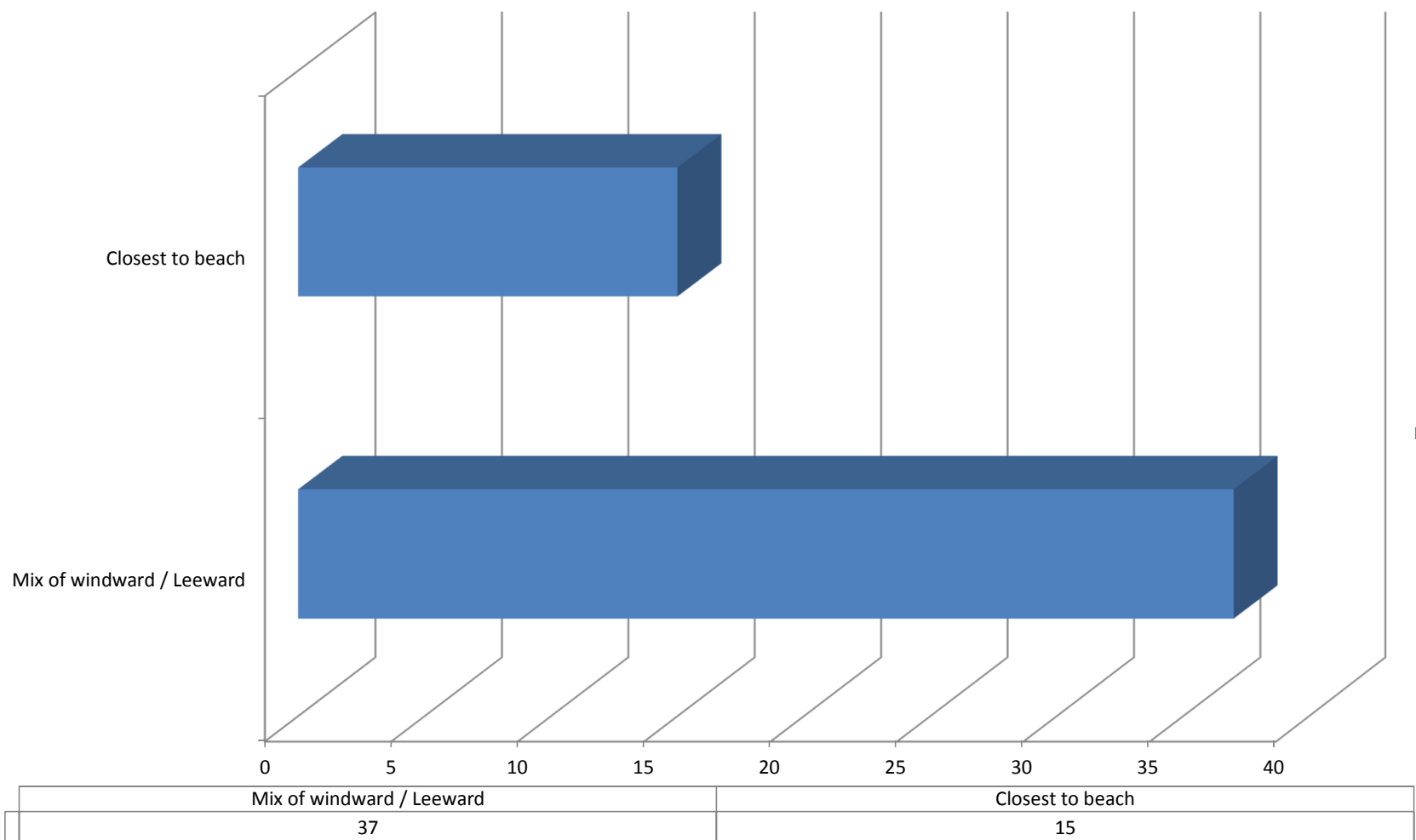
Yes	9
No	44

What is your preferred course?

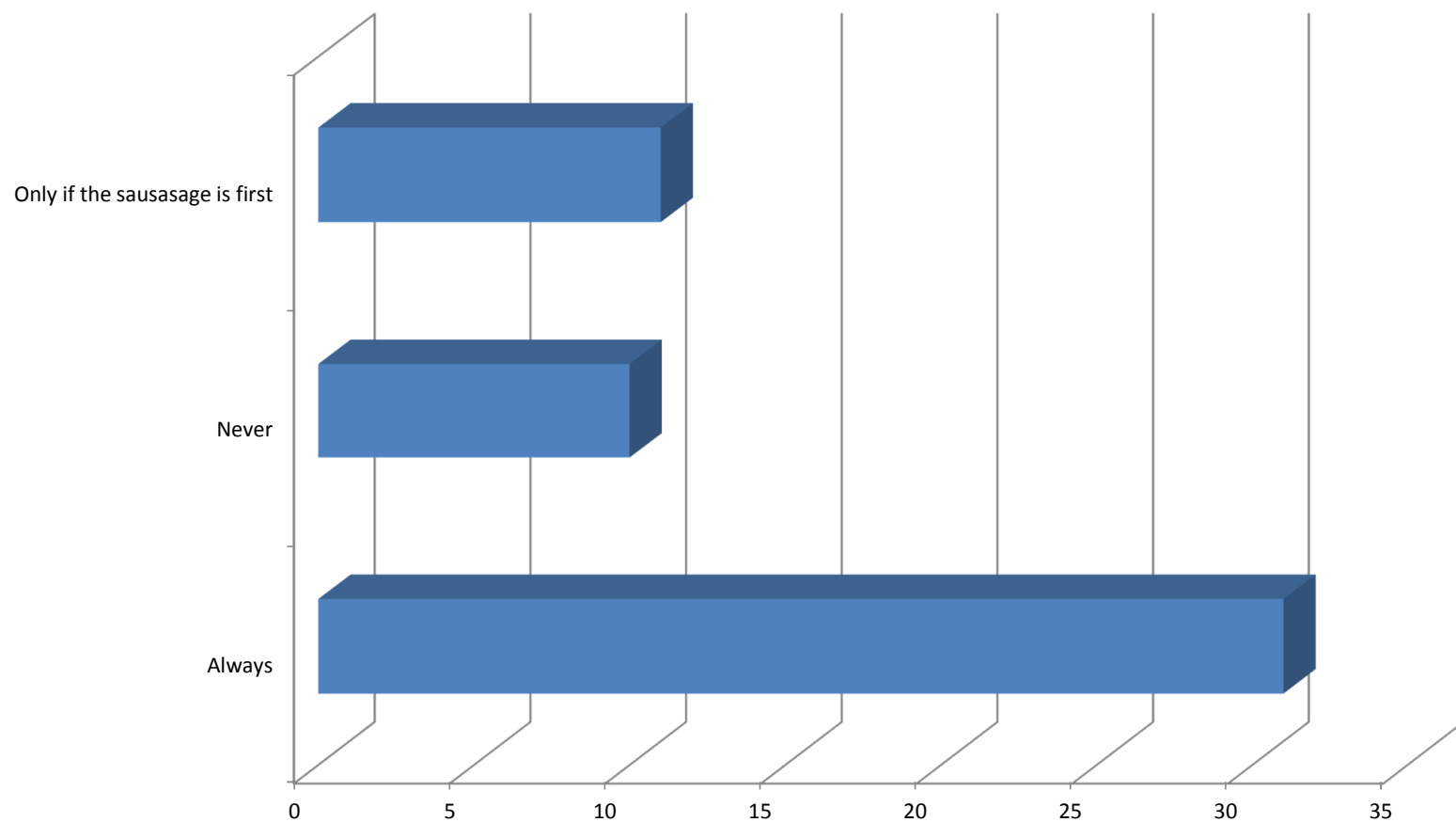


Triangle / Sausage / Triangle	Sausage / Triangle / Sausage	Combination
11	0	41

Where would you like the finish line positioned?

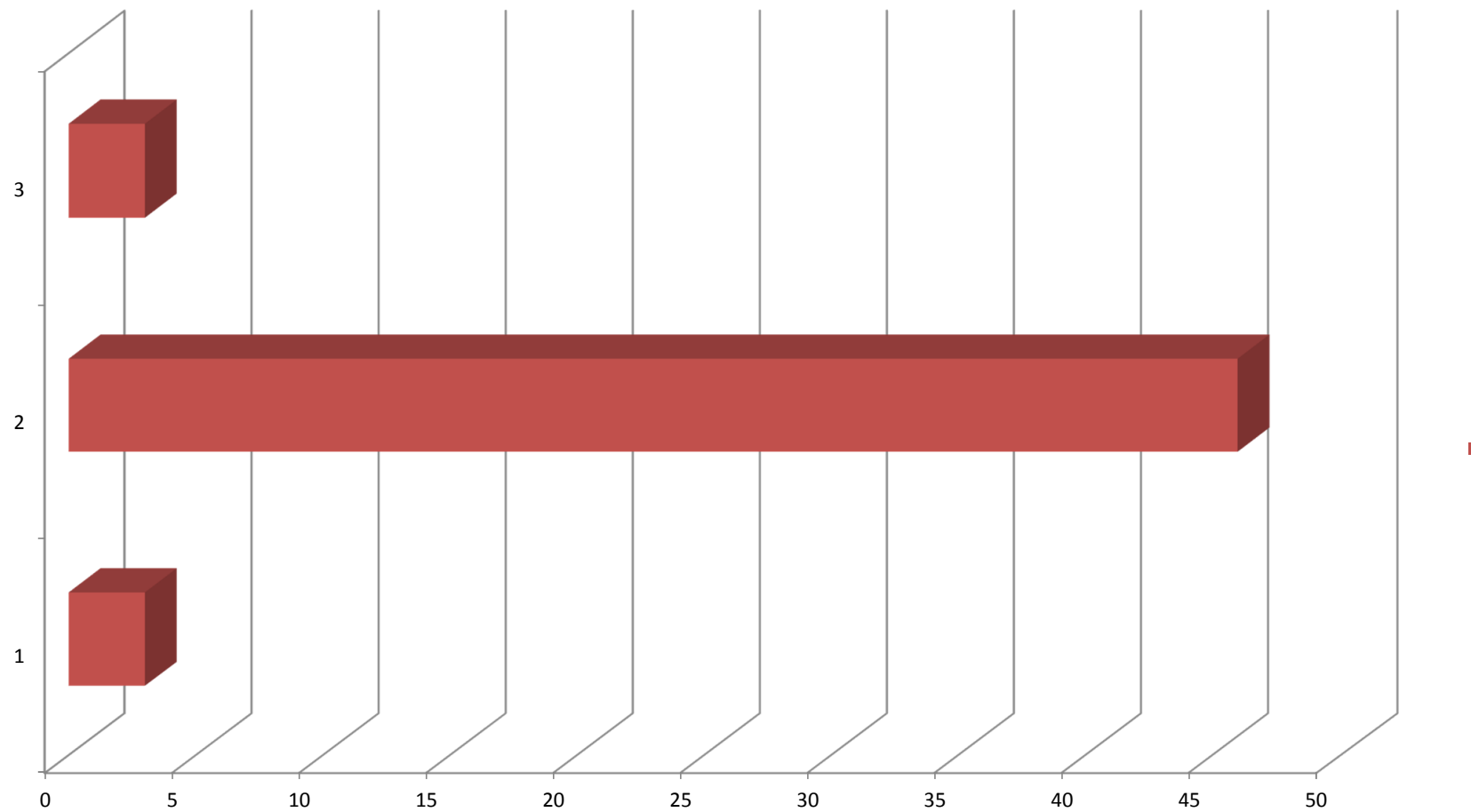


Do you think there should be a gate at the bottom of the run?



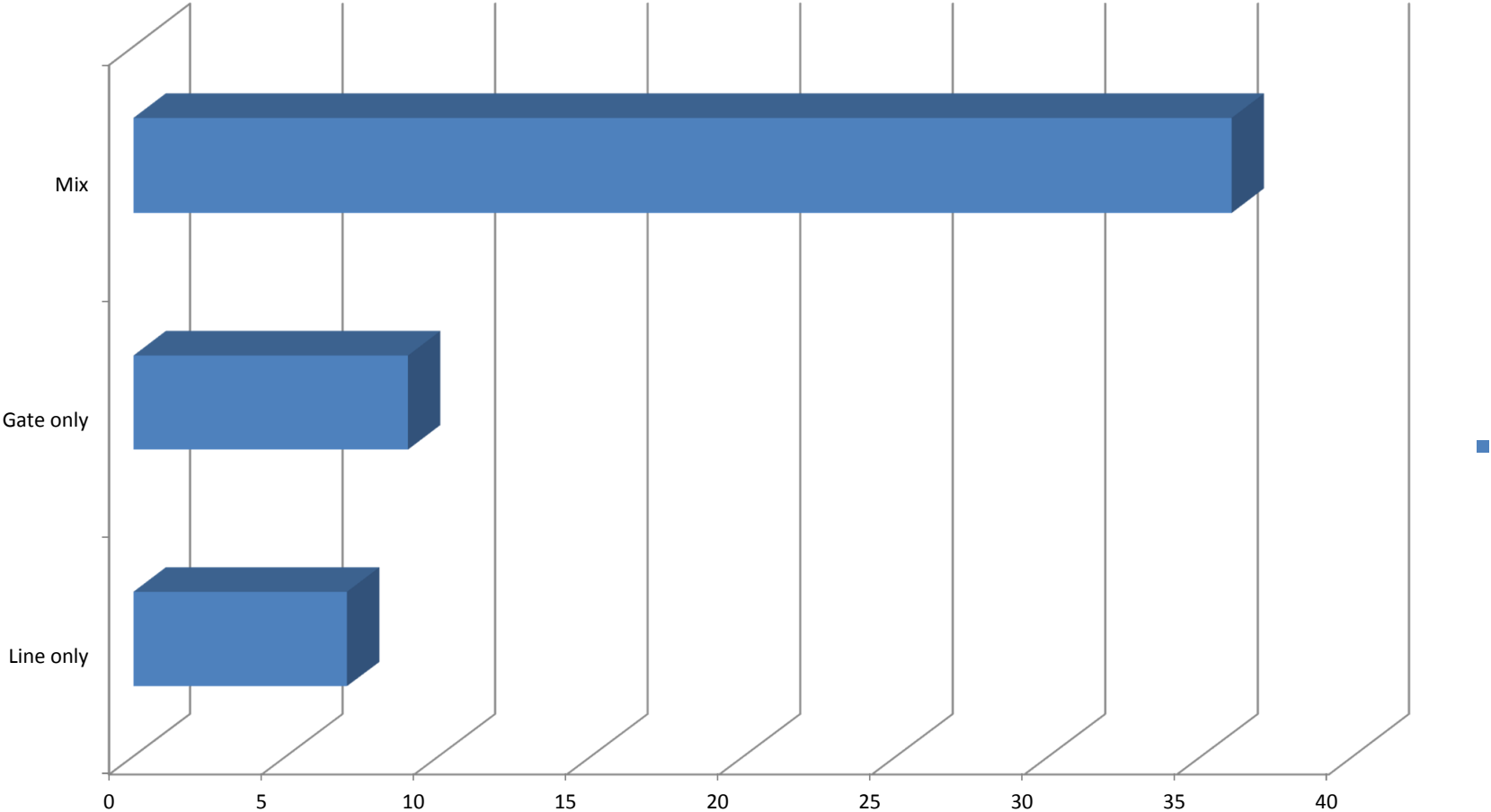
Always	Never	Only if the sausage is first
31	10	11

How many races per day?



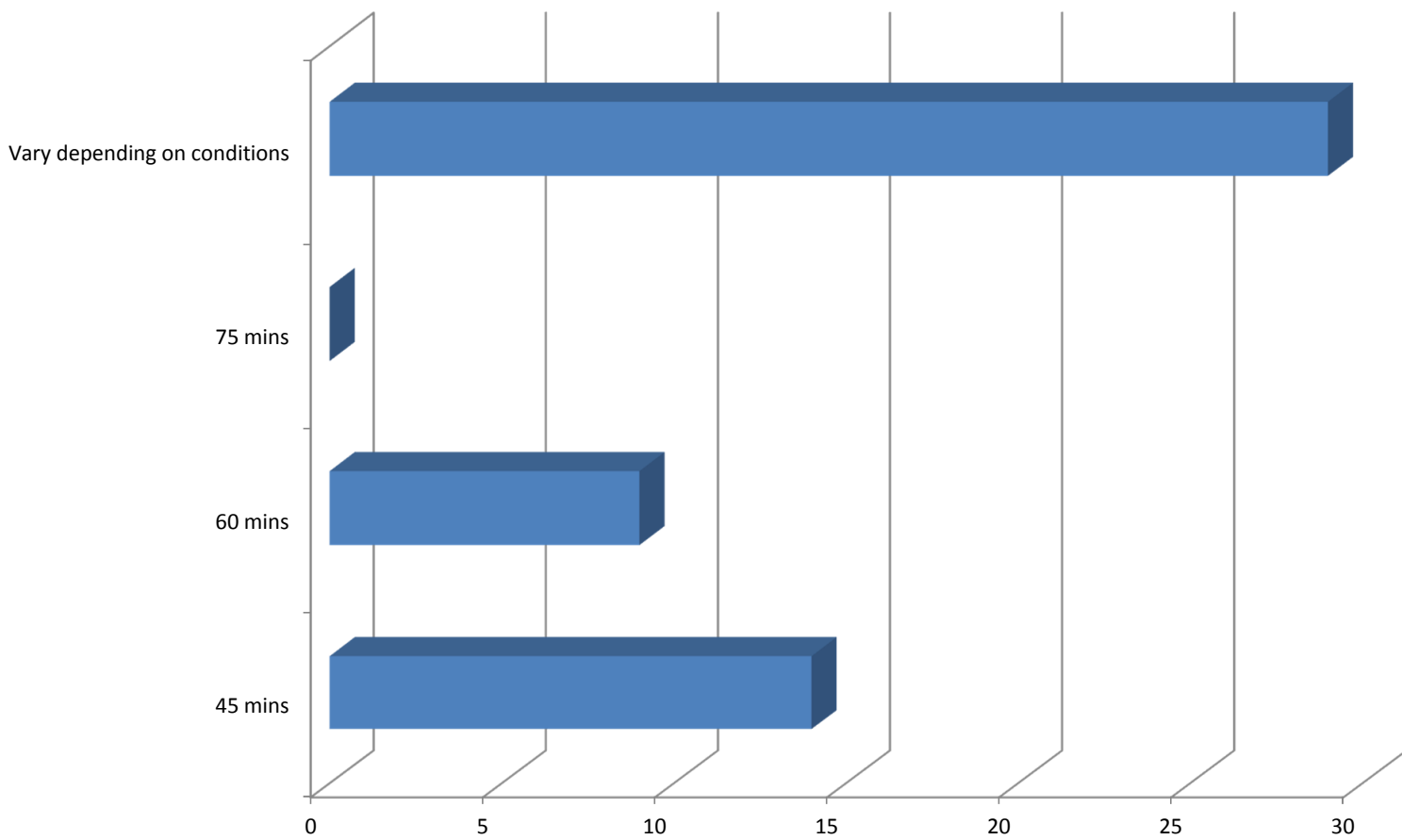
1	2	3
3	46	3

What type of starts would you like?



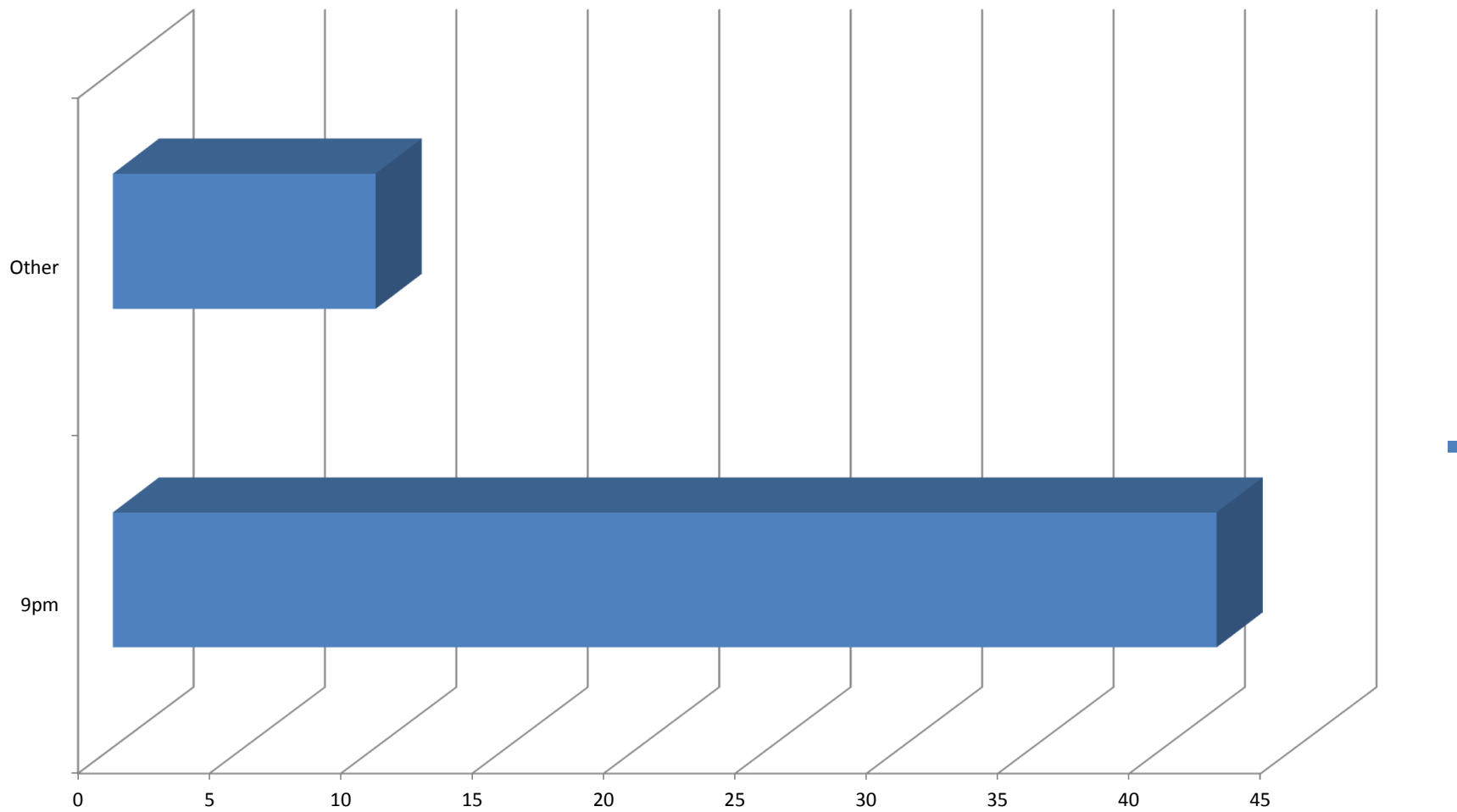
Line only	Gate only	Mix
7	9	36

How long should the races be?



45 mins	60 mins	75 mins	Vary depending on conditions
14	9	0	29

Prizegiving time



9pm	Other
42	10

Comments attached to questions:

3. Comments attached to question 3 - type of course

- trapezoid course would be better
- Trapezoid if it is pertinent with a shifting wind, it gives the PRO time to adjust the course
- The change of course made it more competitive and kept the fleet closer together. Would have been good to have tried course 2 at least once to see how it panned out.
- Trapezoid (but only if the shorter side is sufficiently long to make a championship size beat). The first beat should be HUGE!
- Good to have the standby course of Trapezoid available
- TRAPIEZEHORD
- Trapezoid
- Don't bother with Trapezoid as it takes too long to setup and keep correct.
- We could try trapezoid...
- If it is good conditions you could do a trapezoid course but only around the outside so that every lap is the same and no additional sausage. This is a good way of getting a long beat without a very long reach and run.
- If Sausage first is used I think the course needs to be shorter or longer race to allow a second round of the Triangle. After all the three sail reaches are a lot of fun in windy conditions.
- The Fireball is designed for close reaching with a spinnaker. This gives the most speed and fun. At Tenby a 45 min target race time was ideal, achieved on the last two days. I think the fourth lap was only sailed once. If the course is likely to be shortened always ensure two triangles are sailed. So either triangle, sausage, triangle or sausage, triangle and triangle. We must focus on the merits of the boat and not pamper to olympic or asymmetric sailing by sailing windward leeward courses.
- Run first would be great in medium conditions and big fleets where the inevitable pile ups at the wing mark would be avoided
- majority of 1 say 6:4 ratio.

4. Comments attached to question 4 – Location of finish

- Course where set to close to the shore
- Distance from the bar should never be a consideration in a serious championship.
- Happy with either finish but prefer to finish the last race closer to the landing area to reduce the sail in.
- Maybe consider having the finish halfway up the beat. This could reduce confusion at the leeward mark(s).
- It shall be considering to the windsituation
- With the length of time on the water, and the particularly windy conditions, finishing as close to shore as possible was certainly welcome.
- I believe that the distance left to sail in from the course can put people off from even racing the second race if it's particularly windy or challenging sailing conditions.
- It is possible to spend too long on the water
- I thought the race committee called this absolutely right - downwind finish for the first race to keep us together for a quick turnaround, then upwind finish at the end to give us a different dynamic and take us closer to shore as well.
- Each race should aim to have an even mix of up and off wind legs.
- only finish away from home if there is plenty of wind to get back.
- I prefer a windward finish. Tacking duels up the final beat are nerve racking, and the best tacker usually wins!!!

5. Comments attached to question 5 - Presence of the gate

- It got rather busy at the leeward mark with boats ducking and diving!!!!
- The Run Gate was great and would well in big fleet.
- Most only used mark 4 instead of the additional gate mark 3 but I beleive this was due to which side of the beat people wanted to be on, also dependent on approach to the gate as well.
- Liked it. Gave you a tactical choice to make
- I only think the gate is necessary if the fleet is large (e.g. over 60 boats) - I think it was a bit surplus to requirement in Tenby with 45 boats
- likely to cause more collisions as boats are crossing into the gate
- Should be left to the RC's discretion. If there are not enough RC boats/staff, the gate can be a chore.
- Don't care really but I don't think it added much
- Had to tick a box - NO STRONG OPINION
- confusing at times, not sure which gate boats coming in on starboard were going for. I saw several boats not going between the 2 marks before going round one of them - this needs to made very clear.
- interesting to add this in as really affects the tactics, however rules need to be carefully worded! Also good to keep the traditional olympic triangle course completely without gate for purists.
- THIS GIVES YOU DECISIONS TO MAKE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RUN AND MAKES IT MORE TACTICAL SAILING
- Made it easier to head for the side of the course you wanted to head to without fighting the other boats who wanted to go the other way.
- Adds a new element to the race, another decision to be made. At Tenby it was so bloody windy those first days I just sailed to the usual leeward mark. Force of habit.
- We need to be clear in the sailing instructions that it is indeed a gate and not a simple choice of two leeward marks. They issued a clarification of this but only after they had DSQd us for adopting a literal interpretation of their sailing instructions.
- I thought that the tactical options would be reduced by the desire to drop into the port bag, because of the next reaching leg, but in the event that wasn't the case.
- Most times it caused confusion probably as the marks were too close together.
- Allows you to use the other mark if one is busy
- I think this adds to the tactics at the leeward mark and keeps the racing interesting.
- I personally thought it was a terrible idea but I wasn't keen on the course
- It is challenging for the race committee to lay more marks so in the event of a shift they are less likely to move the marks. We should encourage marks to be moved and consider options to make it easier.
- The gate was too small, the understanding I have is the buoys should be at least 10 boatlengths apart, being close together led to some difficult and potentially dangerous incidents
- One counter arguement is that the skill of leeward mark rounding is reduced

6. Comments attached to question 6 - No of races per day

- I would like to do a mixture of one and two races
- or may be more races if kept short, 2 no. hour long races was enough,
- Max of 2
- The day off on Wednesday as frustrating s the weather was kinder than Sunday, Monday and Thursday. What about having a single race Tuesday and Wednesday and make the race slightly longer.
- This depends on the conditions and the 45 minute rule. I believe the 45 minute limit on races should only be if the breeze is over 18 - 20 knots. If the class sticks with 45 minutes under 18 knots of breeze then we could deff complete 3 races in a day.
- We need large, Championship sized courses. More than two per day over a week would be unattractive to some members of the fleet.
- 2 races. No more than an hour.
- 3 is fine if needed to catch-up with the racing schedule
- 2 OR 3 - I don't feel one race will usually be enough. I go to the Nationals for a week of sailing, not sitting on the beach.
- I believe that shortening the races at the end of the week was a good call - we had taken a beating by that stage and the slightly shorter courses proved to be far more comfortable while still promoting the good racing!
- More can be run if required in order to get the full 10 races in.
- Maybe a mix of two shorter races (+/- 45 minutes for leaders) or one longer race (+/- 90 minutes for the leaders) per day. Two or three days of 2 races, and 2 or three days of 1 race. Three races per day would be OK if there is some catching up to do for a lost day, but they should not be longer than 45 minutes.
- Two is okay as well as long as there isn't much hanging around.
- One a day, of a good length, would keep all abilities of the fleet feeling good - the hotshots would be able to get back once completed without hanging around for us stragglers, and we at the end of the fleet doing our best wouldn't be worried about holding races up with people getting cold and irritated. And everyone gets to sail and race. Stamina is also worth considering - some sail most days of the week and train very hard, others only occasionally and there are also varying fitness levels.
- 2 races but keep them short. If people vote for 1 race then that could be a bit longer
- For me personally, two races of the right time length (approx one hour) is preferable to one long race as this gives a proper series. Plus, if one race goes badly or have gear failure, you still have another chance that day to do better.
- TWO RACES ARE ENOUGH IN MODERATE TO STRONG WINDS HOWEVER IF IT IS LIGHT WINDS THREE RACES COULD BE SAILED
- two is good of short 50 min races.
- Happy to do 3 if some days racing has been lost. Otherwise 2 a day is plenty.
- Given the time spent in rigging, derigging and getting to the start, I am in favour of as many races as possible.
- I think 45 minute races were really good it made everything snappier. The hosting clubs need to be quicker at laying courses to save hanging around.
- 3 short races better than fewer long races
- It's about time racing and time on the water. Two at 45-60 mins for the leader or one longer 90 mins? Or three short 30-40 mins on one day maybe?
- 3 races if you are trying to catch up.
- 2 or 3 races a day would be fine depending on length and weather conditions
- Max of 45 for the first - 50 min second
- 2 is probably the right number (except for 3 day nationals where a 232 or 332 format would be best).
- There could maybe be some flexibility, why not two days with one race and no lay day? Timing the starts earlier in the day would also allow more free time, a midday start is the worst of all worlds as the time before the start is just lost and arriving back on shore late means a rush ahead of the social events.

- A combination of two and one. The problem we have at the moment is that if a day is lost due to poor wind, we start sailing three races a day. At Tenby is this had occurred, it might have broken the 'Camal's back'
- A mix of one and two races per day might be interesting.

7. Comments attached to question 7 - Type of start

- Preference is gate starts, as there is the best chance of getting the fleet away, Line starts are a recipe for generals and black flags!!
- Weather plays a lot. So gate is possible but if too windy or too light
- Good to have a gate start for first race to minimise delays
- Line starts unless more than 50 boats
- The gate starts were good but the odd line start adds variety.
- Gate starts work well if there are lots of boats (e.g. 60+ boats), they seemed a bit unnecessary at Tenby with only 45 boats
- Line starts are better in lighter conditions force 3 and below. For windier days a gate start is good as the fleet gets away first time generally
- If the fleet is large or if it's windy, gate starts make eminent sense and ensure that there won't be a million general recalls. Both starts require different skills, so a mix would be good.
- This really depends on the number of entries. Gate starts were not needed with the number of entries we had, and are also problematic when the courses are short. This year's event would have been better with all line starts.
- Thought I hate the gate starts but found I rather enjoyed them. Hadn't done any racing until last week.
- I like gate starts. They are much fairer for those boats that do not sail in fleets of fireballs, so do not get the practice of speed off the line in a bunch of fireballs and then get left behind. On the other hand starting at the wrong end of the gate can cost you dear. Happy to do a mix though.
- Gate starts with more wind or larger fleet, however line starts more applicable for less wind. But prefer gate starts where possible.
- WITH GATE STARTS WE ALL GET AWAY FIRST TIME NO RECALLS OR BLACK FLAGS
- Line starts = general recalls=more time flogging your sails getting cold
- We were happy with the mix but felt that a line start is a better test of skill for a national championships.
- We don't get to practice Gate starts very often so it is nice to do them.
- The Fireballs are notorious for pushing the limits even when there is a black flag flown! Gate starts almost always ensure the fleet gets away first time. There is always a debate that the top boys don't like them as everyone has a chance of a good start but the best usually still win so I don't think this is really a valid point.
- Depending on fleet size.
- If we have 100+ boats then a gate start all the time
- I don't think the gate start is well suited to an upwind planing boat. It is too hard for the ribs to remain in the correct position, which is critical to execute a fair start.
- 50 50 ratio, unless large fleets of 100+ then majority gates

8. Comments attached to question 8 - Length of race

- I think the first two days of racing should have been shorter - as a light crew, I really felt exhausted after two days and that limited the fun!
- You cannot have mile long beats and finish in 45 mins on a format that we had at Tenby, The beats are too long so you don't get the "4 Laps" Grow up Gents! and yes I do do quite a bit of PRO ing inland
- 45 minutes if 2 races on same day; otherwise 75 min
- Depends on the number of races in the day. See above. We found Sunday far too demanding but we were the least experienced crew there and I'm sure the stronger teams managed well. 6 Hours in Sundays conditions was always too much for us and I didn't hear too many positive comments about being out on the water for that length of time from anyone.
- Races for the second half of this year's Nationals were too short. 60 minutes would seem best but in "outstanding" conditions I would not be averse to 75 minute races.
- I think race length should be flexible according to the overall conditions of the week. If it has been really windy all week and then the wind drops towards the end of the week, people may already be too tired to want longer races even though the conditions may be favourable. I think 45 mins is probably the best overall time if you're going to stick to one length.
- Longer races if conditions are 'outstanding' (up to 60 minutes) or if there is only one race per day (90 minutes). Shorter races if there are two races per day.
- Depends on the number of races per day. 60 minutes is about right for two races a day, 90 minutes for one race per day and 45 for 3 races per day. I am not so concerned about the conditions - bad conditions just make it miserable between races.
- Shorter if two races, longer if one in a day.
- It is tempting to go for the fourth option, but remember that Nationals (not necessarily worlds) are holidays and that time off the water to relax is very important. There is such separation between first and even middle of the fleet let alone back of the fleet, that long races are not necessary. If you are doing well it is best to finish as soon as possible (IMHO) and if you are doing badly end the misery as soon as possible and get on with the next race!
- Ideally the majority of the middle of the fleet should sail around an hour. If this means the leaders only race 45 mins then this is ok. Some people may have to race 70 mins. I think that the race officer should always be allowed to finish 'tail enders' on the course so that a) they are not made to sail too long a race, and b) everyone else is not kept hanging around for too long between races.
- sounds good to me.
- The fleet spreads out a lot and after 45 mins there is a lot of distance between the boats. I am not sure that an extra 15 mins sailing would change the results in any material way.
- I think once a race has become a possession it should be ended, but 45 minutes was good.
- If longer people towards the back of the fleet (like us!) are knackered after 1 race
- 45 minutes seemed pretty good. I don't think wind strength is particularly relevant. I sail with a very small 8 stone crew yet would prefer to do 4 rounds in 25 knots. It can be just as tiring trying to get round a course in little wind, perhaps there should be an 8 knot minimum wind strength before sailing?
- It's about time racing and time on the water. Two at 45-60 mins for the leader or one longer 90 mins? Or three short 30-40 mins on one day maybe?
- 50 to 60 minutes for two races, 40 to 50 minutes for three races.
- The race turn around must be considered, the longer the race is for the leaders the larger the spread of the fleet, perhaps considering the spread of the fleet from first to last boat at the end of each lap would give a good indication of when it is appropriate to shorten the course.
- I think there is no need for the 75 minute option as the fleet would be very spread

out leaving a long wait for the leading boats between races.

- This also depends on how many races are sailed per day. One race / day may be 75 mins for the leaders Two races / day 45 mins for the leaders
- 75 mins is too long if 2 races are to be sailed
- There is a danger of turning the nationals into a big open meeting. Championships should be a thorough test and races should be structured accordingly

9. Comments attached to question 9 - Prizegiving

- I have no view on this. The survey made me tick a box. Have to take care of children!
- Depends on venue and the amount of accommodation that is close by - don't tie yourselves in knots - if the format is a single race - you can bring it forward
- Depends on the venue
- But also happy to have dinner after prize giving.
- 8
- After racing so that people are around!
- If you want to encourage better socials, why not include more of the evening activities in the entry fee? It would encourage people to attend....though I can see the advantage of charging separately to give people more choice!
- The humiliation of forced beer drinking is something I thought I left behind at university. This was pretty unbearable and if it did provoke a choking incident it could be pretty ugly with major repercussions for the class. However the idea of the yellow jersey for the days biggest mistake is a good idea and a bit of fun, so the stories and the jerseys without the beer would be fine.
- 9pm works well, and I found that everyone was extremely sociable. What a welcoming and lovely fleet. The Feckwit award is a good bit of banter, and the shirt and wig a bit of fun, but I know I am not alone in hoping the beer gets disbanded with! I wouldn't deal well with being in the chair, and feel it would put me off joining in with the same enthusiasm (for fear!), especially being completely new. Mr Fireball was hilarious fun and the organised food great. Andy is also a true gem.
- I think 9pm or later, even 9.45. Perhaps some more specific socials - eg - bad taste night (with prizes), Fireballs' got talent - definitely with prizes, crew's union?? All these are done in other classes. Black tie dinner every alternate year. A band you could dance to playing cheese.
- A bit earlier is better, from 7-8 starting I think is better, especially for people with families and children.
- Having this soon after we get off the water is good as making it back to the club later is difficult for those with families.
- 9pm prize giving was excellent it allows your kit to dry get some tea and come back to the club not having to rush home. Plus we spent more time at the club because of this.
- Social events/ food should ALWAYS run to the time stated in the booklet
- Comments re the event generally... Race winners: 1st - 3rd in all three fleets + classic announced / acknowledged instead of just the trophy winners each day. More daily prizes? Needs additional sponsorship. Tee shirts. Discount vouchers from Harken, P&B, North, Insurance. There's a limit to how many water bottles and notebooks we can give out... What value did the sponsors actually put in? More social activity for non sailors / families. E.g. Boat trip as at Restonquet. Possibly even while racing is occurring. Spectator boats? Trolley dollies - pleeeeeeze! Better planning and execution of scrutineering. Buddy assignments after day 1, with prize for most improved pairing. Mr. Fireball is excellent - keep it. Likewise the f*ckwit. Better intel re prize categories - e.g. Wheelchair trophy. We should probably not plan to make a loss on lowest cost entry categories. Break even maybe? More clarity re fleet assignment process / rules. It's completely opaque to most people. Don't try to cram too much into an evening - it just goes to pot. AGM - published agenda, start on time, follow constitution. Don't try to make major decisions - get approval for ctte to take it fwd and implement or report back. Follow up from previous years (e.g.

Poss hull rework we asked builders to look at). We need expert marketing help to promote the class to a wider audience. We all know it's a great boat. We need to tell those who don't yet know. Electronic dist'n of results daily so we can publish properly - photos of results page is a bit naff (but better than nowt). Organisation. Needs to be by sub committee. It's too much for one person. We're all time poor these days. Irish fleet give out mugs but in any series no-one can win more than one. This spreads the largesse out.

- 1. Buffet and Curry night was not good enough. BBQ was good food. 2. Welcome pack should include more, Tee shirts, lay day exersion discounted tickets,etc. 3. Finishing dinner should be included, even if it fish and chips or simular. 4. Non sailers meeting group was formed informally, I suggest a general notice /meeting time would insure no one misses out. The wives had a good week. 5. A free drink for the boat that makes a mistake would be good. 6. A very good week, thanks to you all for running it, well done. Ideas :- Auction of sails or goods supplied by sponser of races is a good way or raising money. Add a note on the entry form asking if any one would be willing to sposer a race or part of a race or dinner say £100-£200- £300 etc. A for sale board selling second hand boats/sails and parts would be good for all.
- However I think having late prize giving was the cause of missing out things like the buddy night (I think a very important part of developing the fleet and making it more inclusive).
- Agree, although 9 becomes 9:30-10. 20:30 is probably a better time.
- The championship venues should ideally have a large enough club room to hold the events Tenby was very restricted.
- I was not aware it was on at this time!!!
- Sooner after the sailing
- I would like to see an earleir time set. It could vary depending on whether dinner was being served at the Club.
- Excellent socials this year, very good balance.
- variety for socials is key

10. Comments attached to question 10 - Venues

- Pwhelli, Abersoch, Hayling Island
- Abersoch, Pwllheli, Weymouth
- Looe, Tenby
- Penzance Looe Mounts Bay
- Marazion - Penzance area Pwhelli or Abersoch HISC - Weymoth
- Tenby,Mounts Bay,Weymouth.
- Tenby, best so far, followed by Penzance, Pentwan
- Marazion in Cornwall with lasers Hayling island Largs
- Lyme Regis, Mounts Bay,Tenby
- Have only done Tenby and really enjoyed it. I have sailed at Weymouth and would certainly intend to attend a Nationals held there.
- Tenby Pentewan Sands Looe
- Mounts bay, shoreham, Tenby
- Mounts Bay Whitstable Looe
- Ones with more sailing club facilities but also nice to be in a town.
- Looe Lyme Regis Tenby
- Looe, Pentewan,
- I have only been to 3 nationals so no comment! :)
- Mounts bay Penzance Weymouth
- Mount's Bay (spectacular sailing venue, friendly club) Weymouth Academy (great facilities, but \$\$\$)
- Haven't been to anywhere except Tenby so can't give a helpful list here.

- Brightlingsea Brixham Lyme
- Hayling Island Penzance Lyme Regis
- Anywhere around Mounts Bay Pentewan Sands Looe
- MOUNTS BAY LOOE LYME REGIS
- Rutland, Weymouth, Mounts Bay.
- Marazion Tenby Restronguet
- Weymouth Hayling Tenby
- Penzance. I have only been to 3, I wouldn't go back to Tenby or Looe, trailer parking, waiting between races etc.
- Pentewan/ Brightlingsea / Penzance
- Mounts Bay/Penzance Looe Lyme Regis
- Mounts Bay Tenby Looe
- Any location that is not too far from launch to race area, and minimal tide. not Restronguet 1hr sail back in too far or Brightlingsea too much tide.
- Tenby is good up to 50 boats Filexstoe ferry. Cows, Gernard sailing club, Isle of wight. Any east coast venue! Mersea Dabchicks!
- I have not taken part in enough events to comment on this sorry.
- Lyme Regis, Looe and Mounts Bay
- Lyme Regis, Weymouth, Hayling
- (Looe, Tenby) Weymouth Town Sailing Club, Shoreham, Llandudno
- Mounts Bay Hayling Island Torbay
- Marizian, Lyme Regis, Looe
- Weymouth Tenby Lowestoft!
- Hayling, Mounts bay,
- Mounts Bay Tenby Looe
- Lyme Regis Looe Mounts Bay