

# The 2024 WOW/WAH Regatta – Information Sheet

**This document is intended to provide you with useful information about the Women on the Water/Woman at the Helm (WOW/WAH) Regatta, answer some frequently-asked questions, and share a brief history of women’s racing in Santa Monica Bay. Note that this is informational; please consult the race documents for the rules governing the event.**

We look forward to seeing you on the water on August 10 and 11.

## History and General Information

The Women on the Water Series began in the early 1970s with the “Ladies Got Guts Race” to the Isthmus at Catalina Island. Organized by Stan Lieberman and sponsored by Del Rey Yacht Club, the event was initiated to interest women in learning more about boat handling.

The enthusiasm of women for racing prompted other yacht clubs to sponsor their own “Women Only” events. These races became organized as a series in the late 1970s when then [California Yacht Club](#) Commodore Robert S. Wilson donated an antique silver loving cup to be awarded to the top woman sailor in Santa Monica Bay.

In 2002, the Women’s Sailing Association of Santa Monica Bay ([WSA](#)) donated a crystal sailboat perpetual trophy for the winner of the WAH division with the most entries. In 2005, a Martin 242 half model was dedicated as a perpetual trophy in memory of Cheryl Rembert, who was an active Santa Monica Bay area racer. The Cheryl Rembert Memorial Award is given to the top placing Martin 242 in the WOW division.

In 2023, all three of these perpetual trophies were lost in the fire that destroyed California Yacht Club’s clubhouse. A replacement has been proposed for the WSA WAH perpetual trophy. The WOW and Cheryl Rembert perpetual trophies have not yet been replaced.

The WOW/WAH regatta has two divisions: **Women on Water** (WOW) — composed of all female teams and **Women at the Helm** (WAH) — composed of coed or all female teams with a female driver. Both divisions race the same weekend in one regatta. Each division may have multiple classes, depending on entries. All classes will race in the same general area of Santa Monica Bay, but will have separate starts and may have different courses.

The ASMBYC Women’s Sailing Coordinator is the regatta chair, and oversees the organization of the event. The Organizing Authority (OA) for the event is WSA in conjunction with the [Association of Santa Monica Bay Yacht Clubs](#) (ASMBYC). WSA and ASMBYC co-host the regatta with the following Marina del Rey area clubs: [Pacific Mariners Yacht Club](#), [Santa Monica Windjammers Yacht Club](#), [Del Rey Yacht Club](#), [South Coast Corinthian Yacht Club](#), and [California Yacht Club](#).

All five clubs participate in the regatta: California YC provides race management and on the water support, and the Women’s Sailing Association handles much of the set up and legwork for the event. Del Rey YC, Pacific Mariners YC, and Santa Monica Windjammers YC provide party venues, allowing racers and volunteers to enjoy each other’s company on Friday, Saturday and

Sunday evenings of the race weekend, respectively. It's wonderful how the entire Marina del Rey community comes together to support women's sailing!

Each year, the OA produces race documents that govern how the regatta will be run. The Notice of Race (NoR) specifies eligibility and entry criteria, outlines the fee structure, the schedule of events, and the types of courses. This document will be posted several months before the regatta and will give instructions on how to enter. Within a week before the regatta, a second document, the Sailing Instructions (SIs), will be posted. These instructions give specifics on the courses, marks, scoring, and penalty system. The NoR and SIs are the official race documents, while this Information Sheet instead presents an overview of the annual WOW/WAH Regatta and attempts to answer questions that are frequently asked leading up to the event

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Who is eligible to skipper?

Only women can skipper during this regatta. If the entire crew is female, then the boat is eligible to race in the WOW division. If the crew also includes men, then the boat is eligible to race in the WAH division. The NoR may require that WAH boats are comprised of at least a minimum percentage of women.

All-women teams often compete on borrowed boats and many people ask if the owner is permitted to be on board during the regatta. If the owner is male, the team will not be eligible for the WOW division even if the male boat owner does not contribute in any way to the racing. If you have an all-female team and none of you own a boat, start looking for potential male or female boat owners EARLY, like in springtime or early summer. You'll need to convince the prospective boat owner that you're ready for this responsibility – plan to go sailing with them several times and learn exactly how they take care of their “baby.” Expect that the owner might want to go with you on some of your practice sessions until they are comfortable with your boat handling. Ask former [WOW winners](#) or WOW competitors how they found boats to borrow. Start talking to owners at post-race parties early in the year ([California Yacht Club's](#) Sunset Series on Wednesday night, starting in April, is a great way to meet other sailors). WSA and other clubs typically run race clinics (both classroom and on-the-water training) 1-2 months prior to the race weekend to provide additional race-related information and practice so take advantage of these opportunities especially if you are new at the helm or are sailing with a new team needing to build their timing and teamwork. Typically, teams who commit early and practice together tend to perform better.

All skill levels are invited to participate - typically you'll see both experienced women sailors on the race course as well as beginners. Many women have been sailing in this event for 20 or more years, and some will often take out women who are new to sailing/racing. If you're new to racing and want to skipper, consider bringing along a more experienced mentor.

## What types of boats can be raced?

Eligibility criteria are spelled out in the NoR and may change slightly each year. In general, the regatta is open to keelboats that are rated with [SoCal PHRF](#), as well as some one-design classes. The NoR may specify bounds on the eligible ratings - this is to try and keep competition close and fair.

## How are the boats rated and scored?

We rely on ratings established by [SoCal PHRF](#). Using these ratings, we use the "time on distance" method of scoring - this adjusts boats' finish times so that boats with different ratings can be fairly compared. The difference between two ratings is the number of seconds owed for each mile of the race course. Lower PHRF scores equate to faster boats. For example, if a faster boat with a PHRF rating of 150 sails against a slower boat with a PHRF rating of 182, then the faster boat "owes" the slower boat 32 seconds ( $182-150=32$ ) for each nautical mile of the race course. For example, on a 4-mile race course, the 150 rated boat must finish ahead of the 182 rater by more than 128 seconds in order to be the winner.

## What are the classes and divisions?

There are two primary divisions: one for all female teams (WOW) and one for coed or all female teams with a female skipper (WAH). The NoR may specify that crews in the WAH division are to be comprised of a specified percentage of female participants. The WOW teams compete for the Robert Wilson perpetual trophy, and the WAH teams compete for the WSA perpetual trophy.

Within each division, depending on the rating spread and the number of entries, classes may be established that try to group more similar boats together. In WAH, a typical division would be into Performance and Cruising classes. The deed of gift for the WAH perpetual trophy supports such divisions, as it specifies that the perpetual trophy will be awarded to the winner of the class with the most entries. The deed of gift for the WOW perpetual trophy, however, specifies that the trophy be awarded to the overall winner. As it is difficult to establish an "overall winner" when boats race in different classes on possibly different courses with different numbers of races, all classes within WOW start together and sail the same course.

Additionally, the deed of gift for the WAH perpetual trophy specifies that the winner shall not previously have been awarded this trophy. The rationale behind this stipulation was to encourage women helming a coed boat to take the next step in a future year and form an all-woman team.

## What are the types of courses?

The SIs specify the courses and indicate how they will be signaled to racers. Courses are a mix of windward-leeward (WL) and random leg (RL). WL courses race around set marks - typically inflatable tetrahedrons. Boats complete one or more "laps" around the marks as specified in the SIs. In a WL course, the weather mark is set directly upwind, and the leeward mark is set directly downwind of the weather mark. RL courses, on the other hand, are not set with respect to the wind direction and usually include reaching legs. Marks on RL courses may be a mix of set inflatable marks and permanent marks. RL courses are usually longer than WL courses - typically one might do 3 WL races in one afternoon and perhaps just 1 or 2 RL courses. Bring a navigation device (GPS) to help you find the RL marks if you know you may race a RL course.

The WAH Cruising boats usually do RL courses. WAH Performance and WOW primarily sail WL courses. Both the WAH Performance and WOW boats may do a mix of WL and RL courses, depending on the conditions and the types of boats entered in those divisions.