

Going to an open meeting – Give it a go

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You've enjoyed racing at your club and now fancy going along to an open meeting. How do you go about it?

It may be your club is one of the ones having an open, or perhaps there are Miracle sailors in your club who are on the circuit who can show you the ropes. In this case you can join in and others will help you along.

If you don't know anyone yet have a look at the calendar on pages 4-5 and see which event you would find it easiest to attend. Having picked an event consider:

- **Trailer**—Do you have, or can you borrow, a suitable trailer with good wheels and tyres.
- **Boat**—Is your boat sound and does everything work. A boat doesn't need to be "racing fit" to give pleasure racing, but you don't want to have any breakages.
- **Entries**—If the event is the National Championship you will need to register in advance (See page 7)
- At events other than the Nationals you register on the morning of racing, this usually costs £8-£20 depending on the number of days and venue
- **Accommodation**—Do you need accommodation? Many events are Saturday and Sunday and competitors stay the Saturday night and sometimes the Friday night. Do you want a hotel, B & B or to camp? Many sailors camp or have motor homes and the contact and/or website for the hosting club can advise what facilities there are available
- **Weather**—In the run up to the event check the weather forecast to assist making the final decision about whether to go.
- **Event still on?** - Contact the club representative to confirm.

Having decided to go what next?

- **Towing**—Pack the boat for towing, taking great care to ensure everything is securely tied. Does the trailer board work correctly. When you set off drive for a little while and then find a safe place to stop and check nothing has loosened off. Don't forget to pick up obvious items such as sails, rudder, etc.—all things that have been left by someone at some time (someone has even managed to drive off without their boat and had to go back!!!).
- **Arriving**—Some people travel on the Friday and drop their boat off at the club, others arrive on the day of the competition. Someone is usually around to show you where cars and boats go and where the camping and other facilities are, but if your going on the Friday check beforehand.
- **Entries** - On the day of the competition find out where entries are being taken and enter and check the time of the first race. This may also be when you can order lunch and/or dinner. Many Miracle events are at small clubs where numbers are needed for the catering. It's possible once they've run out of something that's it, so booking ensures you've a meal!

Race Times—Common times are:

- **1 day** event there are usually 3 races with the first race frequently at 11.00 am.
- **2 day events** there are usually 2 races on the Saturday with the first at 12.00 noon or 1.00 pm. On the Sunday the first race is usually 11.00 am with 3 races over the day. Don't forget the time is the start time and sometimes there may be quite a long sail to get to the start line so make sure you give yourselves plenty of time.
- **Back to back** is when races are sailed one after the other without coming ashore. Whilst the Miracle fleet prefers to come ashore between races, there are often times when "back to backs" work best, though usually no more than 2 at a time.

Rigging and launching—Find somewhere suitable to rig your boat and find out what the launching arrangements are. Sometimes there are long waterfront areas and you can take your part rigged boat down ready for launching. Other times everyone has to go down narrow ramps. In this situation finding a suitable parking place for your part rigged boat so you don't get "boxed in" can be time well spent.

Briefing—The other time to find out is when and where the briefing is to be held. This is where someone, usually the Race Officer, will give an idea of the sailing area, mark numbering and anything especial it's worth knowing about, e.g. shallow areas, changes to standard sailing rules, is it 2 or 3 boat lengths at the marks, etc. The briefing is also where you will find out when and where the course will be displayed and how. It might be given at the end of the briefing, or it may be displayed on the Committee Boat once the fleet is afloat. Most sailors turn up to the briefing in sailing gear so they can go afloat straight after.

Out to the start—Remember to give yourself plenty of time. Watch the other boats, following them out is often a good plan. Also keep an eye out for the Committee Boat as that is going to be one end of the start line wherever the wind changes to. In addition it's going to fly the flags signalling the race, or its postponement (the long red and white pennant), so staying in its vicinity means you will know what is going on.

Starting—At the start line there will be a lot of boats sailing in a small area. Either your happy about that and will join in, or it all looks a bit scary. If you decide it's scary just sail to the outside of the pack where the boats are further apart and plan your start so you start once the fast pack have gone. Having said that there are occasions when the fast pack get it wrong and the conservative starters are able to get away quite nicely thank you!

Your off, and have joined in your first open event. The Miracle fleet is one where boats race each other from the front of the fleet to the back, so there will generally be someone to chase and someone to keep behind. It doesn't take many races to work out who you are usually racing against.

Hopefully you will enjoy yourselves and join the rest of us on the circuit who make it to whatever events we can, even if it is only a few a season.

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