



Initial Proposal for Olympic Games Format

July 30, 2025

Purpose of Document

This document outlines ILCA's initial position on a format for ILCA events at the 2028 Olympic Games. It is a draft that serves as a basis for communication with stakeholders such as World Sailing, event hosts, and others. It remains subject to further modification and refinement as we proceed with the testing and implementation phases.

Background: Paraphrased from the guidance of the Format Working Group

The IOC has conditioned retaining our quota and 10 event slate for LA28 on improvements in three main areas:

- *More compactness*
- *Shorter races*
- *Simpler operation.*

The broadcasters followed with strong guidance regarding:

- *A more digestible format*
- *Schedule reliability*
- *Simpler terminology*
- *Better insights and information flow from Race Officials*
- *On-screen technology*

We must now take decisive steps to reduce costs and complexity, while increasing the value sailing brings to the Olympic Games.

ILCA's Guiding Principles

In considering changes to the Olympic racing format, ILCA is guided by the following principles, recognizing that these are ultimately decisions made by World Sailing. We acknowledge the guidance recently provided by the Format Working Group and believe the ILCA Guiding Principles and our proposed format closely align with the stated objectives.

1. ILCA is committed to strengthening sailing's position in the Olympic Games and ensuring that ILCA maintains a place in the Olympic sailing programme.
2. ILCA recognizes the current challenges in our sport and agrees that change is essential to boost our sport's media appeal.
3. ILCA sees opportunity in this situation. For example, a new racing format could extend beyond the Olympic Games into an "ILCA Pro Series," bringing additional media exposure to our sport.
4. ILCA takes pride in being the class that provides universality to the Olympic sailing program and aims to see as many countries as possible compete for a chance to be represented in the Games. In the 2024 quadrennium, 90 countries participated in ILCA qualification events, and we believe that reaching 100 countries is achievable in this cycle.
5. With thousands of ILCA sailors competing in our major championships each year, from youth and masters to aspiring Olympians, ILCA believes it is important to ensure that any new Olympic format does not unnecessarily disrupt the grassroots of our class.
6. ILCA believes that a format with an Opening Series, Semi-Finals, and Finals can be successfully conducted within the timing constraints of the Olympic schedule and can achieve the desired outcome of enhancing our sports media appeal.
7. Any new format must balance risk and excitement with fairness and legitimacy of the competition.
8. Races on broadcast days will need to be shorter to fit television schedules, aiming for 18 to 20 minutes per race.
9. ILCA is confident that a robust OCS detection system can be tested and implemented in time for the first Olympic qualification event in early 2027, ensuring that general recalls are eliminated and that races start on time, no matter the conditions.
10. ILCA believes that the proposed Olympic racing format can be carried out with fewer race personnel both on and off the water, leading to simplified logistics and cost savings for World Sailing and the organizers of the Games..

ILCA Olympic Format

ILCA proposes a format where athletes from 43 countries compete in an Opening Series, Semi-Finals, and Finals. Competitors will be eliminated after the Opening Series and Semi-Finals, leaving 14 boats to compete in a three-race Finals series, which balances excitement with fairness.. We believe this event schedule can be completed easily within the available racing days scheduled for the Games. The proposed format is currently untested and may be adjusted slightly based on

feedback from upcoming format testing events. Since the exact number of racing days for the ILCA classes is not known, the programme below and the length of each series can be adjusted to accommodate the available days.

Opening Series

- Competitors from 43 nations highlight the broad reach of our sport and the universality of the ILCA class.
- Athletes compete in a 4-8 race opening series, depending on the number of racing days available. The preference is for 6 or more races due to the fleet size, if the schedule can accommodate it.
- One discard race.
- The top 28 boats advance to the Semi-Finals.
- Windward / leeward course (with possible refinements) helps reduce the number of race personnel needed.
- OCS detection and semi-umpired races to ensure quick calculation of points.
- Points/places do not carry over to the next round.
- The event could be scored and finished at this stage if weather conditions do not allow for the next rounds to be sailed.
- The race target time is 30-35 minutes, meaning it is not intended for live broadcast television. This race length preserves some of the “big fleet” legacy of the class while allowing for a quick and efficient series to be held.
- If live television coverage is desired, the fleet can be split into three flights of 14-15 boats, with 18 to 20-minute races. This format would have the same fleet size and race length as the Semi-Finals and Finals.

Semi-Finals Series

- Two fleets of 14 boats compete in a three-race series.
- Points are not carried forward from the Opening Series.
- No discard race.
- The top seven in each fleet go through to the Finals.
- Target race time is 18 to 20 minutes, optimized for television.
- Points/places do not carry over to the next round.
- The event could be finished at this stage if weather conditions prevent the Finals series from being conducted.
- OCS detection and fully umpired races allow for quick scoring and ranking.
- ILCA will test logistics around race management and media for conducting multiple races simultaneously on the same race course.

Finals Series

- Three-race, no discard series with 14 boats.

- Target race time is 18 to 20 minutes, optimized for television.
- A three-race series and a small fleet is very likely to result in medals being decided in the last race of the series.
- Full tracking, telemetry, and onboard cameras to help viewers understand who the leader/winner is at any given time. Digital technology (information on the screen) is essential (as shown by SailGP).
- An alternative “winner-takes-all” final race is not currently favored, as, although attractive for broadcast with maximum risk and excitement, there is a question of fairness and integrity of racing. As we know, our sport is influenced by chance in a way unlike any other.

Other Factors

- ILCA has been working with technology companies involved in OCS detection technology for several years. We are confident that a GPS-based OCS and scoring system can be implemented in time for the first Olympic qualification event.
- Consistent with World Sailing guidance, we aim to avoid postponements for wind shifts with the use of robotic marks. This is facilitated by using a simple, windward/leeward course.
- Enforcement of Rule 42 is an ongoing discussion that we plan to address during format testing events..
- There is considerable support in the class for retaining our World Championships racing format – i.e. large international fleets and 45-50 minute races. Care must be taken to maintain the strength of our class while allowing for the Olympic Games format to evolve.

Next steps

We are at the early stages of planning test events to assess and refine the proposed format. We hope to conduct a stand-alone test event in October of this year.

We are very interested in your feedback on this proposal, and we are available to discuss the details or answer any questions you may have.