

Our Class has been offered a wonderful opportunity to not only expand our rolls, but also to become a “forward thinker” in the sailing industry. When you get your Spring Newsletter you will read my thoughts on building our local Fleets (as well as an article on handicapped sailors that did the 2004 Macinac race), and this opportunity dovetails perfectly with those thoughts. In essence we have been asked to modify our Class Rules to permit modifications to our boats to permit those with physical handicaps to compete with the rest of us. The Technical Committee has looked at the proposal, and while in agreement that we should permit these modification for 2006, has found that interpreting our current Rules to permit such modifications is outside the scope of their authority. And the only way our Rules can be modified is by going through the same process we do each Fall/Winter, and therefore we would not be able to respond soon enough to validate any participation in the 2005 sailing season.

I have reviewed the requested modification (allowing only modifications for handicapped sailors registered with the ISAF approved International Foundation for Disabled Sailing (IFDS)), and we will post the modification somewhere on the website well in advance of any voting so you will have a chance to comment on it. I think you will agree these changes are not what an able-bodied sailor would call performance enhancing. While making these modifications may seem like slowing the boat down to the majority of us, to those in need the modifications it open a whole new adventure in the sport of racing. I am asking each of you to do whatever is necessary to allow anyone with physical challenges to race in your Fleet in 2005, and we will then modify the Rule this Fall to “legally” permit the needed modifications. This will be a lot like how our society operates; something becomes socially acceptable and then is made law.

What is in for our Class? Besides opening the door to many new owners, we will get the recognition as being an open minded Class. Betsy Alison, who is heavily involved in promoting the needs of handicapped sailors and who thinks the J/105 is an excellent platform for them, is helping us through the issues. For those who know Betsy, you would agree that in addition to being a highly regarded sailor in her own right, “perseverance” might as well be her middle name. Your officers and the Executive Committee are always looking for ways to promote our Class. I cannot think of a better vehicle than opening our arms and welcoming those who are physically challenged.

Tom Carruthers  
Class President