

Guide to New Parents

Intro

Welcome, you've just joined the best junior sailing class in the world.

This booklet will provide a brief overview of the class within the UK, more detailed information can be found on the association website –

www.optimistsailing.org.uk

IOCA(UK)

This is the class association in the UK. Membership is currently around 550 sailors and their families. The aim of the class is to support all its sailors at every level of ability they are sailing at.

Under class rules children can sail Optimists competitively until the end of the year in which they reach 15 however there is no minimum age limit with our youngest member being five years old. This means membership is in constantly changing with lots of new faces appearing every year as families grow through the class.

Purchasing your first Optimist

There are a number of options and places you can look for a second hand Oppie, try your local Oppie sailing clubs websites or notice boards, the association website or classified sections of dinghy magazines such as Yachts & Yachting. We have a very useful article in this year's Optimist Annual for more information.

Flotillas

You'll hear plenty of talk about "Flotillas". This is merely the name given to any group of 5 or more sailors who are members of the class association. Usually Flotillas come from the same club, however sometimes it may be made up of a group of youngsters from several small clubs. Each Flotilla will have a leader who is the main point of contact with the class

association and their contact details can be found on the website under 'Contacts – Flotilla leaders'

Areas.

The class is divided into regions for some training and racing purposes, these are as follows :-

Scotland, Wales, North, Midlands, Eastern, Thames Valley, South West, South, South East.

It should be noted that these regions differ from the "Zones" run by the RYA

The Class appoints Area Representatives in each area to arrange training and to liaise with the local Flotilla Leaders. Their contact details can be found on the website and at the back of this leaflet.

The Class Committee

The committee consists of 13 people who are elected by the class at the AGM (held at the National Championships). These include:-Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Sailing Secretary & Training Officer. Full details of all committee members can be found on the website under 'Contacts'.

Class Administration and Events Manager

Sharon Bullock organises all of the championship events, teams and squad training as well as everyday membership enquiries. For all enquiries Sharon can be contacted at admin@optimist.org.uk or Tel 07713 499225.

Regional Coaching Manager

Clare Hall is responsible for all coaching matters at a regional level. Clare is happy to come along to advice a new flotilla, help with rigging tips for new sailors as well as supporting all our sailors at our championship events. Clare can be contacted on coach@optimist.org.uk and 07704303011.

Communications

Op e:News

IOCA publishes an e:newsletter six times a year with lots of information on what's been happening around the country as well as future training and event dates and top tips from our regional and national coaches.

The Optimist Annual

Once a year IOCA publishes The Optimist Annual, which gives a roundup of all the events that have happened over the previous year, as well as lots of top tips on how to run a successful flotilla and coaching ideas.

RACING

Major Events

IOCA organises six major fleet racing events per year

Spring Championships (March)

Selections Invitation only (May)

Inland Championship (May)

National Championships (July/August)

End of Seasons (October)

Winters (November)

The RYA also organises the Zone Championships which is an all pathway classes event, run in each RYA Zone in September.

The Springs and Winters

Due to the time of year that these are held these are main fleet events and are attended by those sailors who are used to competing.

The Inlands and End of Season Championships (EOS)

There is a Regatta Fleet for less experienced sailors at both of these events with remaining competitors sailing in the Main Fleet. With entry numbers in main fleet usually in excess of 200 the fleet is split into 4 groups (flights).

Each sailor is given a coloured pennant which is attached to the top of the sprit. Each colour group then races the others twice to give a 6 race series.

National Championships

The "Nationals" are held in late July or August each year. In recent years it has been held in Largs on the west coast of Scotland. Pwllheli, on the North Wales coast, and at the Olympic sailing venue on Portland – WPNSA.

In addition to the separate Regatta fleet the main fleet is divided for this event with a Junior Champion & a Senior Champion being recognised, to complete the series 12 races are scheduled in each of these fleets. The Regatta fleet is also split into 3 sections for this event, offering higher levels of coaching for the younger, less experienced sailors.

❖ Mini Racers

The mini racer fleet is for sailors normally age 7-9 who are new to racing. The emphasis of this fleet is getting the sailors afloat and enjoying sailing. The sailors are divided up into small groups and allocated a coach for the week. Their coach will run games and activities on and off the water keeping the sailors entertained and having fun. There are as many prizes for taking part and having fun as there are for winning the races.

❖ Regatta Coached Fleet

This fleet is for all ages and aims to cater for sailors who have some racing experience but wish to also develop their sailing skills. There is coaching in the morning in small groups with lunch ashore and racing in the afternoon.

❖ Regatta Racing Fleet

This fleet is for the more experienced racer that is not quite ready to move up to the bigger courses and numbers of the main fleet. The regatta racing fleet sailors are each allocated a coach that they have access to on the water to help with any racing related questions. The emphasis is to get as much racing practice as possible to give sailors the confidence to at some point in the near future move up to the main fleet.

For those sailors who thrive on competition IOCA also have a National ranking series which at present consists of the Inlands, Nationals and EOS's. In order to gain a full ranking, sailors will need to have competed in all three events from which a national ranking will automatically be produced. From this national ranking, sailors are selected for the RYA National and Intermediate Squads, IOCA Development Squad and the top 90 or so also get invited to the Selection Trials from which our GBR Team places are selected. To complement the above ranking system the RYA also offer an excellent winter training programme through the Regional Zone Squad Programme. Selection for this is usually over two or three weekends training and racing to include the Zone Championships in September. For more information please contact your local RYA High Performance Manager.

Open Meetings

Many clubs hold Open Meetings for Optimists, details of some of these can be found on the website under 'Events –calendar'. At most open meetings there are regatta fleets for the more inexperienced sailor, some even have coached support for those needing more support.

Area Championships

Each IOCA area holds an annual Area Championships. The Area Championships should all have a coached regatta fleet and there is also lots of evening entertainment on the Saturday evening. For more information please contact your local area rep whose contact details can be found at the back of this document and on the IOCA website under contacts.

TRAINING

IOCA runs training throughout the country for all levels of ability throughout the winter months as well some half term holiday camps. The training is based on the IOCA Log book scheme which is similar to the RYA Log Book though is optimist specific. By attending the IOCA training,

coached opens and championship events with a regatta fleet the different stages can be signed off and at the end of each grade badges are awarded. Please contact Clare Hall our Regional Coaching Manager for more details.

VOLUNTEERING

All of the above cannot be run without our endless list of volunteers. From Race Officers to rib drivers, results ladies to trolley dollies, from publishing to coaching there is something for everyone even the non-sailor. We have many willing volunteers supporting all our fantastic sailors many of whom become friends for life. Below are some of the quotes we have collected from parents both past and present on what it is to be a member of the optimist family.

“ Oh you have no idea how much I miss it” Jane Sparks

