



## A guide to Performance handicapping.

**“Why is my handicap so bad?” a sailor laments. “I can never win on the handicap given to my boat. I can’t sail my boat any faster therefore my handicap should be lower. The handicapper is an idiot!!”...** These and other like comments are heard frequently at all yacht clubs and regattas. Everybody is convinced that they should have won. So let’s look at what a Performance Handicap is and how the system works.

The best way to think about a PHS (Performance Handicap System) handicap is to compare it with a Golf handicap. All golfers have the same equipment (golf equipment that is) however, as we all know, their performances are quite different on the golf course. The golf handicap makes up for those differences giving the weekend hacker extra shots so he or she can compete against the expert.

Sailing is similar in that the handicaps are based on performance. The better you sail, the more your handicap goes up. The worse the performance of a boat, the more you will get rewarded by lowering your handicap. Over a long series, the lows and highs will get evened out and most boats will have the opportunity to get on the dais. But be warned – “sandbagging” NEVER works in a regatta.

Yachts are given a number known as TCF (Time Correction Factor) that is usually a decimal figure. Large faster boats will have a TCF greater than 1.000. A reasonable performing 35ft yacht would be somewhere near .750. This TCF is applied as multiplier to the elapsed time of the yacht for a race. The result is the Corrected time for that yacht for that race. Lowest corrected time wins the race of course.

In its simplest form the Performance handicap is worked out by taking an arbitrary boat from within the fleet from the previous race, say third place, and all other boats handicaps are then recalculated to achieve the same corrected time in the race. This is called the Back Calculated Handicap (BCH) and that number for each boat is adjusted by the TopYacht program to a CHC (calculated handicap) that is applied to the next race. If a boat’s BCH over a number of races is averaged, a fair and equitable handicap is usually achieved. However, there are so many variables on the water in a short series it is not always possible.

The problem with events like Port Douglas Race Week, Magnetic Island Race Week, Airlie Beach Race Week etc, is that it can be very difficult to set a suitable initial handicap for many of the diverse entrants, especially as nothing is known about a boats previous performance.

Another issue is that a boat with a known performance history may buy new sails, or “import a heavy” such as John Bertrand or some other paid skipper, and will then sail well above its usual performance. Quite rightly, those changes will push a boat’s TCF up & must be declared. Scrubbing a boats bottom clean and/or sailing with the minimum amount of water & fuel that the Special Regulations require will not result in an increase in TCF.

For Port Douglas RW we will attempt to manually adjust a boats handicap after the first days racing if it shows up as too generous or unfairly too high, but those adjustments will not apply to races already completed. If the boat is new to Port Douglas RW, you supplying previous race results will assist in arriving at a TCF that will not disadvantage the boat.

The race committee is always conscious of meeting the needs of the competitors where ever possible. This includes using the right courses as well as ensuring the handicaps are fair and equitable across the whole fleet.