

The ABC's of Racing to Ensenada - 2012

Are you thinking about entering the Newport-to-Ensenada Yacht Race? Are you wondering what you should do next?

HOW TO ENTER

GET A RATING

To get a rating for your boat, you need to be a member of PHRF of Southern California (PHRF-SC) or of the Ocean Catamaran Racing Association (ORCA). This applies to all racers regardless of their home port. PHRF-SC issues the Rating Certificates for all of the PHRF boats that participate in the Race. ORCA provides NOSA with an Official Ratings List for ORCA boats. Refer to the Notice of Race on the NOSA website (www.nosa.org) for contact information for PHRF and ORCA.

SAIL NUMBER

You need to have a sail number for your boat. If your boat doesn't have a sail number, contact Southern California Yachting Association (SCYA) to get one. Refer to the Notice of Race on the NOSA website for contact information for SCYA.

If you are from out-of-state or out-of-country, you can obtain your sail number from your local or National Authority.

ENTRY FORM

You need to submit an Entry Form. The Entry Form can be found on the NOSA web-site. Enter on-line, or print an entry form and mail it to NOSA.

CREW LIST

You also need to fill out the "Crew List" found on the NOSA web-site. This is a requirement from Mexican Immigration and US Customs.

PASSPORT

You will need a Passport to re-enter the United States from Mexico. For information on passports, refer to the NOSA website.

HOW TO PREPARE

Now that you've entered the race, it's time to prepare your boat and your crew for the fun and adventure of sailing to a distant port.

BOAT

Since the race is 125 miles, you will most certainly spend at least one night at sea. This means you need to check all of your lights (running lights, mast head light, and red interior lights).

Now is a good time to look at every one of your sails for potential problems (small tears, loose stitching, etc). Make sure your main sail has a sail number on it (mentioned earlier). NOSA needs to identify your boat as you cross the start line and the finish line. Also, a tip from the pro's...label the head of your spinnaker so that you won't set it sideways in the dark.

It's also a good time to look at every piece of gear you have to be sure they all function. If you have any battery-powered gear, change the batteries and carry spare batteries.

Speaking of batteries, when did you last check your boat's batteries? Are they fully charged? Most day races don't consume much battery power, but running all of your lights and electronics through the night will obviously drain your battery. Remember, you will need enough battery power to start your engine after you cross the finish line.

Update your GPS with waypoints. Divide the race course into at least four (4) legs and add waypoints for each leg. It makes the race more fun (have a contest to see which shift sails further).

Which course should you take...inside the Coronado Islands or outside the Coronado Islands? If outside, how far offshore should you go? Although it's true that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, it may not be the fastest. Study the weather websites for at least a week before the start. Look at the wind patterns. Study the forecasts. Once you decide where and when will there be "good" wind, you can plan which course you will take.

CREW

An often overlooked component of distance racing is the need to have shifts. Nobody can stay awake for 24-36 hours and be effective, so divide your crew up into shifts. Search the Internet for "Crew Shifts" and pick the schedule that fits the best...and stick to it.

During day races, the owner usually steers. You really need to have more than one person capable of steering the boat to a GPS course. Skippers need to decide who will share the helm and who the "Watch Captain" is.

Cold sandwiches and soda may be standard fare for day racers, but overnight racers need a hot meal. Simple one-pot dishes are easily heated. Some skippers simply have each crew bring a thermos of their favorite hot food. Whatever you decide, the evening meal should be hot. Same goes for the coffee in the morning. Hot is good!

"Practice makes perfect" definitely applies here. If you and your crew have not sailed at night, you should schedule at least one night sailing session. Practice changing sails at night. Practice finding a bell buoy or some other location using the GPS and compass. And...by all means, run a man-overboard drill.

Why all the emphasis on practice at night? Ask any veteran Newport to Ensenada racer and they will tell you **"The Race Is Won At Night"**.



Concentration, attention to changes in wind direction and velocity, and focusing on your Race Plan are a winning combination.

The moon should be about 33% full on the night of April 27, so you will need to be extra vigilant.

MORE

Still want to know more? Attend one of the "Sail To Win" Seminars. Visit the NOSA website and click on "Newport to Ensenada" and then "Seminars" for dates and locations.

Want more "news" from NOSA about the Newport to Ensenada Race and the other NOSA races? Visit the NOSA website and sign up for our E-Mail Newsletter.