

Lake Norman sail racers,

The light winds of Lake Norman make it important for racers to get the most performance they can from their boat and sails. Large genoas and whisker poles have become a staple of non-spin racing.

However, it's come to the attention of the LNKC Board that the rules around whisker poles and their use are not being followed by all of our skippers.

In recent racing, there have been observed instances of:

- Whisker poles in use that were clearly longer than the J measurement of the boat
- Whisker poles with no black markings visible when the pole is extended to its maximum rated length
- Whisker poles being held by crew members while in use to extend the clew of the genoa an additional 3 - 4 feet farther than if attached to the mast

The relevant rules which prohibit those practices are:

From the LNKC Standard Sail and Equipment Specifications:

12. Non-spinnaker limitations

A. The maximum length of a spinnaker pole (whisker pole) that may be used shall be equal to J. If the spinnaker pole (whisker pole) is adjustable, there shall be no gap visible between 1/2" stripes, placed one on each section of the pole where the sections intersect, when the pole is extended to its rated length.

From The Racing Rules of Sailing for 2017 - 2020:

50.2 Spinnaker Poles; Whisker Poles

Only one spinnaker pole or whisker pole shall be used at a time except when gybing. When in use, it shall be attached to the foremost mast.

3.1 a). By participating or intending to participate in a race conducted under these rules, each competitor and boat owner agrees to accept these rules.

2. Fair Sailing

A boat and her owner shall compete in compliance with recognized principles of sportsmanship and fair play. A boat may be penalized under this rule only if it is clearly established that these principles have been violated. The penalty shall be either disqualification or disqualification that is not excludable.

69.1 Obligation to not Commit Misconduct; Resolution

(a) A competitor, boat owner or support person shall not commit an act of misconduct.

(b) Misconduct is:

(1) conduct that is a breach of good manners, a breach of good sportsmanship, or unethical behavior;

69.2 Action by a Protest Committee

(h) When the protest committee decides that a competitor or boat owner has broken rule 69.1(a), it may take one or more of the following actions

(3) exclude the person from the event or venue or remove any privileges or benefits

While keelboat race NOR's encourage resolving conflicts on the water, that doesn't mean skippers should overlook prohibited equipment or practices. In fact, we need competitors on the water to protest others when rules are broken so that racing stays fair for everyone.

In light of these clearly outlined whisker pole rules and this communication being made to all racers, the Lake Norman Keelboat Council will consider any future violations to be violations of the principles of fair play (Section 2) and acts of misconduct (Section 69). We will seek to have protest committees revoke skippers' privileges to race in Lake Norman keelboat events for one year from the incidents in protest.

If you and your crew use a whisker pole, please, please, please take this time before the racing season gets fully underway to check your equipment and review your practices with your crew. These rules are very easy to comply with.

Check your J measurement (distance from the base of your mast to the point where your forestay connects to your bow). Extend your whisker pole to that length or to its maximum length if that is shorter than your J measurement. Check that your two 1/2" black lines are aligned as described in Rule 12.A of the LNKC Standard Sail and Equipment Specifications above when you have it extended. If not, get some black paint and paint on your stripes. If there are stripes from a previous owner or boat that are in the wrong place for your J measurement, sand them off or paint over them in a color that blends with the rest of your whisker pole. You can have only one set of stripes on your whisker pole.

Be sure you keep the whisker pole attached to the mast whenever it's in use.

If you see a fellow racer whose whisker pole or practices are prohibited, say something. We need you to protest clear equipment violations like these. It's not unsportsmanlike to challenge prohibited equipment and practices - - it helps us keep racing fair for all the racers who are following the rules carefully.

We hope that all the racers who have always followed these rules carefully understand our need to be forceful in addressing this issue.

Lake Norman Keelboat Council