

Update on Fireball International Council Vote on Rule Changes

FAQ Sheet

Dear NCA Council Members,

It is very good to see a lot of healthy debate going on about the proposed rule changes, Thank you for supporting us in this. Dave Hall and I have been asked a number of questions on the changes and have prepared a FAQ sheet in response. It can be found on this link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RvKuEGvvC7hg49TLm4Eg6VqYMQf9feHEeLVEn7KpG_U/edit.

We will update it when and if other questions come in.

Kind regards,

Nick Rees
Commodore
Fireball International

FAQ:

Overall

What is the history behind the proposals?

Rationale: This is to show it's not a hasty decision.

Answer: Most of the ideas in the proposal date back several years. The issues with the decline in numbers (both active sailors and new boats built) was identified many years ago, and Fireball International developed the Strategic Plan to address this. Most of the specific hull proposals date back to a proposal in early 2020 from Dave Winder and Russell Thorne. Covid stopped active development of the ideas, but re-started after Covid. There have been open forums where the proposals have been discussed at the Europeans in Portoroz in 2023, the Worlds in Geelong in 2024 and the Europeans in Maccagno in 2024.

Going forwards, we see this to proceed at pace.

- The vote will close on 1 December.
- Simultaneously, we are looking at the specific rule changes needed. World Sailing would like us to do this as part of a complete overhaul of the rules so they abide by World sailing standards are a consistently "closed rules" (See <https://www.sailing.org/inside-world-sailing/activities-services/technical-offshore/technical-services/class-rules/>). We have contracted an expert with significant experience (he wrote the Melges 24 rules, the Musto Skiff rules and has made changes and been involved with many more such as the Dragon, Hornet and

National 18). He will be supported by the technical committee and some other experienced Fireball Sailors, with the intention of having the new rules approved by World Sailing in early 2025.

- The builders are looking at the changes required to the moulds, and proceed immediately once the vote has completed to construct a new deck mould, with the intention of unveiling the new design at the RYA Dinghy and Watersports show from 22-25 February 2025.

What is the cost impact of the proposals?

[With the carbon allowed and without (only deck design changes)?]

Answer: Carbon is now the same price or even less than Kevlar. It is a material that is a lot easier to work with and repair. As regards the deck changes, some of the construction will be simpler to mould and assemble keeping a lid on costs.

What is being done to support the amateur builder?

Answer: Fireball International is looking at generating some wide bowed plans for amateur builders. We have both the Weathermark and Winder molds we can copy, as well as Missile, the boat both molds were copied from. We are also aware of the great work Dave White has done in the US to provide plans and build instructions for wide bowed boats, and we support this. Also, the changes proposed will also apply to wooden boats, if they are relevant.

Proposal 2 (Side decks)

Will flattening the side decks reduce the space in the cockpit or make it harder for long legs?

Answer: The gunwale height remains the same and the reduction in angle is only intended to be small to make it more comfortable for the helm when sitting to leeward. The overall height difference from the outer edge to the floor is the same.

Proposal 3 (Shorter aft deck)

Will this change the moment of inertia (reduce the weight in the ends of the boat) significantly?

Answer: No. The proposal will:

- save weight by removing some of the aft deck.
- add weight by increasing the length of the side tank sides, and increasing the reinforced area of the side decks.
- move the front of the aft tank further back in the boat, not changing weight, but moving it towards the ends.

Only the former will reduce the moment of inertia and the change the weight in the area is estimated to be around 300 grams. In summary, any change in the moment of inertia would be less than moving a water bottle from the thwart to the spinnaker bags (for example).

Proposal 5 (Recessed jib leads)

Will this be allowed for wooden deck boats?

Answer: Yes, once we know what is passed a supplementary set of rules will be produced with dimensions. There are also plans in place to update the original plans.

Proposal 6 (Spinnaker sheet channels)

Is a drawing available?

Answer: Not at this time. Note that if the shorter aft deck is allowed, this modification will not be necessary.

Is the intent to allow an open channel or to have a tube from the block to the cockpit?

Answer: The intention is to have a tube from the block to the cockpit.

Can this tube/channel be used for other ropes?

Answer: It is unlikely that the diameter will be big enough to cater for two ropes.

Will this be allowed for wooden deck boats ?

Answer: Yes

Proposal 9 (Carbon in the foils)

Does allowing carbon in the rudder include the tiller and extension?

Answer: Yes, this is the intention

Proposal 10 : (Hull materials)

What could be the impact of not allowing carbon but at the same time prohibit Kevlar?

Rationale: Boat will still be strong enough and costs will be reduced.

Answer: This is unworkable. Prohibiting Kevlar would mean that the last 500 boats would not conform to the rules.

Will there be limitations on the type of Carbon Fibre used?

Rationale: There should be limits as to the Modulus allowed.

Answer: This is a good suggestion. We will probably restrict it to standard modulus carbon fibre - a Tensile Modulus of < 250 (GPa) seems reasonable.

Proposal 11 : (Twin poles)

Will the rule allow free rein as to how the poles are rigged, launched and recovered?

Rationale: If keeping a guy permanently attached to the pole was allowed it would provide a significant advantage (see 505s and others) and all crews will need to update the boat at some cost.

Answer: The 505 system only works if you have a spinnaker chute. The intention is to allow teams to use a simple control or personalise it to their own specifications.

Proposal 12 (Spinnaker numbers)

Is there a risk there may be a problem for PROs to get numbers on the downwind finish?

Answer: There are many classes that do not have numbers , the Merlin Rocket, GP14, Mirror plus every Asymmetric class and it has not been an issue.

Proposal 13: (Shroud adjusters)

Will boats need to be modified to take the non-vertical load?

Rationale: The current shroud plates are designed to take a vertical load only. It's clear on the Scorpion picture that the shroud attachment is different and is designed to take both vertical and lateral loads. This may mean that current boats will have to be modified to take advantage of this new rule. Did anyone analyse this and determine what, if any, upgrade is needed?

Answer: If the turning block is separately mounted this isn't a problem. Also, most Fireballs with shroud adjusters have at least 8:1 on the shrouds, so the off-axis. Therefore, the current construction of the boat is strong enough to deal with the loads.

Will the design of the system be restricted to the one shown, or will sailors be able to develop it?

Answer: The intention is to allow some development, as long as the function remains fixed to just adjusting the length of the shrouds.

Proposal 14: (Black band limit mechanism)

What is meant by "ensure a main halyard lock"?

Answer: The Halyard lock comment is that you can't have a halyard lock with a positive stop because you have to raise the sail above the band to unlock it. However, it achieves the same purpose if set up correctly in that you can't hoist the sail above the black band in normal racing. We may copy the 470 rule, which is:

F.3.5 (a) Mandatory (11) A device to ensure compliance with C.10.4 (b) (4) unless the mainsail halyard is set on a lock or tooth rack.

Stand 13.11.2024