

To the Commodores of all clubs affiliated to SA Sailing

Lipton Challenge - a vote on the road ahead.

Four years ago the Lipton Challenge was at a crossroad.

The trusty L26, having provided a wonderful platform for high-level one-design racing across SA during the eighties, nineties and early two-thousands, was reaching the end of its life in this particular role.

After a distinguished innings spanning more than three decades the fleet was showing its age, and the Lipton Trustees were facing a growing number of complaints from clubs and sailors that the boats were no longer “equal” in the one-design sense, that there were boats that were inherently faster than the rest, and that L26 racing was no longer a fair contest.

At the same time, although there were a number of excellent sailors at the top of the fleet each year, fewer and fewer of SA’s top sailors were willing to challenge for the Lipton Cup in an L26. We had repeated complaints that “Lipton is no longer a pinnacle regatta.”

Royal Cape Yacht Club had dominated the event for the previous five years, and in 2017, the last L26 Lipton Challenge held in Table Bay, only one of the 11 L26s in the fleet was from a club outside of the Western Cape, and the RCYC team successfully defended the Cup without even having to sail the last race. As strong as the RCYC team was, this should never happen in a no-discard regatta. It was time for a change.

By that stage, a cutting-edge high-performance one-design sport boat had burst onto the local scene, and in no time at all there was a fleet of 11 Cape 31s racing in Cape Town. Capable of handling SA’s often-tough coastal conditions, and of racing in up to 30 knots and more, this looked like a possible successor to the L26 as the boat for the Lipton Challenge going forward. The Lipton Trustees proposed

two consecutive “trial contests”, with two years in the Cape 31 as one of the alternatives to continuing in the L26. The majority of the clubs around SA that took part in a vote supported this proposal.

The attachment below summarizes how the two-contest trial turned out. We hope you have time to read it, but if not here is our takeout from the exercise:

On the positive side, the move to the Cape 31 fundamentally changed the game, and ticked a number of important boxes.

1. It attracted a very large number of SA’s top sailors back to the contest, and at the same time excited a raft of up-and-coming youngsters who had entered our sport in the foiling era and were looking for the kind of racing that the TP52s display.
2. The boat is an excellent test of all-round sailing skill. It is challenging to sail well, and a real handful in a breeze - good team work and boat-handling are rewarded and mistakes punished severely.
3. It opened up the contest and produced the kind of down-to-the wire competition that we hadn’t seen in the Lipton Challenge for a very long time.
4. The Cape 31 put an end to the concerns over “fairness of competition” - it’s a very strict one-design class.
5. The boat itself is “media-friendly” - it looks good and provides spectacular action when the wind is up.

However, on the downside, unless and until the Cape 31 Class takes root around the country, holding the Lipton Challenge in Cape 31s will continue to exclude many of the clubs that might otherwise have competed.

With the importance of inclusivity uppermost in our minds, in the absence of a suitable wide-spread one-design class in our country, and after very careful consideration, the Lipton Trustees now propose another two trial years - **this time opening the contest up to any boat with an ORC International Certificate and with an ORC Class Division Length (CDL) between 8.000 and 9.7800.**

All over the world the ORC rating system, properly applied, is proving to be an exceptionally good basis for handicapping boats that are very different from each other in design but not too different in size.

This upper CDL limit of 9.780 will be the top end of ORC Class C at the 2022 ORC World and Continental Championships - a useful arms-length cut-off - and the lower limit of 8.000 brings boats like the Pacer 27, for example, into contention without stretching the likely range of finishing times too far.

Conducting this historic inter-club contest under ORC won't be as easy as it might sound, and the measurement challenges will be substantial. However, of the 139 boats in SA that currently hold ORC Certificates, 54 have CDLs within the proposed range, so this move would certainly open the Lipton Challenge to far more clubs around the country than has been the case during the two Cape 31 trial years.

As required by the Lipton Deed of Gift, we invite your club to vote on whether or not to support the Trustees' proposal. The only viable alternative at present would be to continue in the Cape 31 for the time being.

A voting form is attached, and the voting deadline is 31 March 2022. Please address any questions to Kerry Pryde, Secretary - Lipton Trustees, at sailadmin@rcyc.co.za, or on [021 421 1354](tel:0214211354).

David Hudson

On behalf of the RCYC Lipton Trustees: Neil Gregory,
Andrew Collins, Mike Peper, David Hudson (Chair).