

Commodore's Report

The whole world has changed in 2020!

In January, we finally got back the Continental European container from Canada and would have been ready for a new Fireball sailing season, a season markedly depressed by Covid-19.

Unfortunately the unloading of the container was scheduled for Jan. 18th, the same weekend the international Ski-Voile was held in Antibes which diminished the number of boats attending. Luckily we did not know then, that this was the only international event actually realized this year!

After the highlights of 2018 and 2019, the worlds in Carnac FRA and Pointe Claire CAN, we had to initiate and support a timely decision regarding the worlds in Howth IRL due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The organizers decided to cancel this event and FI awarded the 2023 Worlds to Ireland instead!

The next world championships are planned for 2022 in Geelong AUS from Jan 30th until Feb 11th. We will have to start our promotion very soon in order to motivate sailors, and to organize and subsidize as many containers as possible to make it a great event after 2 years of restrictions. And still the sword of Damokles named Coronavirus hangs over the event! Australia's border for international travellers are currently closed, and North America and Europe are suffering heavily from the second wave of the Covid pandemic. Our next international event will be the European Championship held in Piombino ITA from Sept 11th until Sept 17th 2021. I am confident, that we will not encounter problems due to Covid. Italy has demonstrated that it has efficiently tackled the pandemic in summer 2020, and the season as well as a possible vaccine should bring down the case numbers until then.

I am happy, that our FI website including the FI calendar is always up to date. However we depend on the information passed on by the NCAs!. In 2020, however, we rather had to delete events from our site since many of the national championships had to be postponed or cancelled. Many thanks to Ruedi who is happy to get any information concerning Fireball issues but also searches for such news and publishes them right away. Don't hesitate and have a look at www.fireball-international.com.

Based on the very positive open meeting in Canada concerning carbon poles, a Council decision for the corresponding Class Rule changes was requested together with the ratification of the budget 2020. Both requests were accepted by World Sailing. However, the rule changes still wait for a definitive ratification. Part of the problem is that World Sailing furloughed most of his staff until the end of June or even July. Thus, my request was only answered in August. The rule change was then accepted in principle, however, the wording will need more precision.

In April an interesting discussion was initiated by a UKFA member about developing the layout of the cockpit . However, citing Tom Egli, "we have to look at this from the perspectives of the pro builders, the amateur builders and the owners of existing boats. Given that none of these suggestions are "retro- fittable", I'm not sure they would fly with the owners of existing boats."

Financially Guy proposed to relieve the NCAs from the subscriptions this year, because of the lack of any international event. This was acknowledged by FI Council. A corresponding request was sent to World Sailing in April to waive or reduce the international class fee. We have contacted the Finance Assistance and the Business Operating Manager, with the Technical Head also becoming involved, and we were advised to wait pending a review by their board of Directors. Whilst this board review is still pending we were surprisingly informed by the CEO (David Graham) that FI will be suspended as world sailing class until our 2020 fee was paid. The CEO seemed unaware that we were already in correspondence on this topic and we have heard nothing of substance back from any of our contacts - who also seemed unaware of any internal communications within World Sailing. We expressed our

disappointment in the seeming lack of coordination and communication within World Sailing whom we sponsor by a considerable sum each year, and continue to chase this matter hoping for a resolution.

Furthermore, I was informed in January, that our long-standing International Measurer Pam Johnson did not renew her status as IM. I want to thank Pam for all she has done for FI. I met her for the first time in Silvaplana when I just started to sail internationally again, and I was deeply impressed by her competency and perfect organisation always combined with her friendliness and lovely humour. She did a great job independent of where she had to perform, she followed the rules accurately but always kept any corrections feasible and with a sense of proportion. It was her who implemented the pre-registration of measurement slots which made the process of measuring so much easier and without long waiting times, a remarkable change to the times before. I am very grateful for her contribution to FI.

Lately I was contacted by Chris Henderson actual International Measurer of the Nacra 17 class, who accepted to stand as IM for the Fireballs as well. I am looking forward to meet him at our next international event: The Europeans in Piombino!

Finally I want to thank all of you, FI members! You supported me during the past 3 years as Commodore which let me decide to renew my term. I hope I can fulfill your expectations! Furthermore, my thanks go to my colleagues in the Executive who went along with me during these years helping and advising where ever needed. I am happy to announce that the majority of them will serve again for the next 3 years, which will make my duty much easier.

However, three of the Rear Commodores decided to step down. I therefore want to thank Ben, Debbie and David wholeheartedly! All three of them were usually super-fast in responding to my wishes and questions, and often pushed me to do a better job! I felt well supported in their presence. I am happy to welcome Heather, Al, and Evelyn in our Team who will serve as Rear Commodore Australia, Africa, and North America respectively. All three of them are racing actively, and Heather will be our most important link to the organizing committee of our next World Championships!

I have further decided to add more weight to the technical committee. The Fireball has evolved as a development class although having rather restrictive class rules. This enabled a steady development allowing the owners of older boats to race competitively. Many home built amateur boats actively race, although our fleets mainly consist of professionally constructed racing dinghies. Unfortunately, we have to face a constant reduction of our fleets worldwide. We therefore concluded that we may have to put more emphasis on the evaluation of means to attract new sailors, especially young sailors. My answer to tackle this problem is to establish a larger technical committee composed of an experienced amateur builder, a young measurer and a professional boat builder, all of them active Fireball sailors.

With Tom Egli, Mitja Nemec and Dave Hall as the chairman I am lucky to have three persons dedicated to our class who have agreed to take on this task.

I want to express my gratitude to Tom who has served as the one and only expert for technical issues for decades. I hope to meet his need of a reduced time commitment due to his enhanced professional obligations while still being able to rely on his profound technical expertise.

Your FI Commodore

Christina Haerdi