

Are sails becoming too expensive?

The Norwegian Melges 24 Class Association would like to raise a concern regarding the increasing cost of sails and the financial barriers associated with remaining competitive in the class.

The Norwegian fleet is in a somewhat different position from many of the larger international fleets. We have very few, if any, professional teams, and the majority of our sailors are club racers who fund their own participation. Despite this, we have recently experienced significant growth in participation and renewed interest in the Melges 24 class. We see a strong opportunity to continue building the fleet, attracting younger sailors and creating a sustainable class for the future.

However, as the cost of campaigning a Melges 24 continues to increase, we are concerned that sail expenditure may become an increasingly important barrier to participation. In a highly competitive one-design class, sailors naturally feel pressure to replace sails frequently in order to remain competitive. In Norway, many teams rely on second hand sails, but when only 3-4 teams can afford buying sails every second year, the market is dry. For many club-level teams, it is impossible to justify new sails as they represent such a significant proportion of the total cost of racing.

The Norwegian Class Association would therefore like to initiate a dialogue with the International Melges 24 Class and its Technical Committee to explore whether there are opportunities to limit or better regulate the types and quantities of sails used in certain events or at national level.

The intention is not to reduce the performance or competitiveness of the Melges 24. On the contrary, we believe that maintaining close and competitive racing while reducing unnecessary equipment costs could make the class more attractive and sustainable for a broader group of sailors.

We would therefore like to investigate questions such as:

- Could restrictions be imposed on the type of material used for the Melges24 sails?
- Could the international class initiate a standardization with one designer for a period of time to limit the drive for development?
- Could we limit number of spinnakers to one?
- Could national class associations be given greater flexibility to establish sail restrictions for domestic series and championships?
- What would be the implications of such measures for class rules, sailmakers and the international competitiveness of the fleet?

Our objective is to understand what opportunities exist within the current class structure to reduce campaign costs while preserving the fundamental principles of the Melges 24 as a competitive one-design class.

We believe this discussion could be relevant not only for Norway, but also for other national fleets where participation depends primarily on amateur and club-level sailors. As the class continues to develop internationally, ensuring that it remains financially accessible will be important for maintaining healthy fleets and attracting the next generation of Melges 24 sailors.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with the Technical Committee and the International Class Association.

Norwegian NCA
By Chairman, Vemund Gransæther