

## **BFA letter to National Finn Associations:**



Dear Class Secretary and Finn friends,

We are writing to you to express our deep concerns over the complete lack of action or any communication from the IFA Executive since the final confirmation of the Finn being dropped from the Olympics. The British Finn Association would like to hear your views and suggestions on how the class should move forward from here, so we can all contribute ideas to the IFA.

For the last five years, the British Finn Association has been asking the IFA what are the plans for the class in the event of it being deselected from the Olympics, and what we could do to help. Each time we were rebuffed with responses that the Executive had it all under control, lobbying was going on behind the scenes and it was politically best to keep it secret.

Sadly, the facts are that (as Philip Baum previously affirmed,) the IFA were too complacent back in 2012 and failed to grasp the concept that gender equality was a serious requirement from World Sailing and the IOC. The opportunity to react quickly and look for a realistic solution at that time was lost. This was not helped by an alleged 'secret' deal between the IFA President and the 470 President not to table any submissions that involved the loss of any 470 events. Probably the only chance to retain the Finn would have been to match it with a Women's 470 event, but this option was denied without any discussion within the class as a whole.

There are numerous questions our and no doubt your members would like to ask the IFA:

1. A study of the IFA latest accounts shows a balance of €140,000 and lists several salaries including an Events Secretary's of €12,000 although there will only be a possible Gold Cup and Europeans to organise in 2022. The IFA has an annual budget of €90,000, funded by subscriptions from all our member associations, so what will National Class Association members receive now in return for the IFA levy?
2. Will there be a Gold Cup or Silver Cup in 2022? There is no mention on the website calendar and no list of international events published in the latest FinnFare? The IFA needs to plan the 2022 Gold and Silver Cups now, and to build a strategy to attract new competitors now most of the Olympic sailors have left the class. With so much money in the account, maybe the IFA could subsidise entries for U 23 and Open competitors and perhaps help with costs for those travelling from other continents?
3. Does the IFA executive committee plan to enter a submission for the Finn to be re-selected for the Los Angeles 2028 and if so how will they address the gender and event equality requirements?
4. What plans does the IFA have to keep the recent Olympic campaigners and U 23 sailors in the class? What is the possibility of organising an international professional

circuit similar to the Star Sailors League and has the IFA investigated funding opportunities with sports marketing agencies and broadcasters?

5. Is the FIDeS development programme still running and if not, where is its funding now being used?
6. Why does the IFA not have a Code of Governance or comply with the current World Sailing Constitution, which under item 73 does not permit any person being eligible for nomination to the office of President if that person has held the office for the preceding continuous period of 8 years? Codes of governance are now required by all major sport organising bodies, so before we try to engage with World Sailing again we need to ensure we are properly constituted and not to give them any excuse to exclude our submissions.

So where do we go from here? We have some positive suggestions to improve the International class, but there are no-doubt many more great ideas to come from you and your association members that we can all share and put forward to a new and refreshed Executive Committee.

Some initial recommendations are:

1. The Finn is no longer an Olympic class. The IFA should therefore reduce its cost base by becoming a volunteer organisation with no salaried members, with the exception of a part-time Media/Press Officer.
2. All positions for the IFA Executive should be open for nominations and election at AGM's that are readily accessible to all the majority of the membership, such as at the FWM or Europeans. There should also be a limit on the number of years that can be served in each office. Voting members of the Executive should not also hold salaried positions, to avoid any potential conflict of interest.
3. An international programme should be developed to keep the Finn profile active until 2024 with the objective of getting back into the Olympics beyond that. There could be many options for this. One idea is to promote a 'Finn Olympic Tribute /Legacy Series' with qualifying events in 2022/23 and culminating in a 2024 final to be held in France. Each Nation selects their own entry, there would be gold, silver and bronze medals with a \$100,000 first prize, \$50,000 second and \$25,000 third. This could potentially be funded from current IFA reserves plus income from 2022/23/24, but sponsorship revenues could be raised from host venues, suppliers and broadcast sales.

We have all witnessed the successful development of the class since the early 80's, moving from Dacron sails and aluminium masts to the advanced equipment we all enjoy today. This steady stream of incremental improvements in the Finn was driven by passionate and gifted

technical experts who were sailors first and foremost and understood the effect the changes would make without destroying the challenge and appeal of this iconic boat.

Many 'mature' one design dinghy and keelboat classes have managed to reinvigorate interest by updating their equipment, such as introducing laminate sails and carbon masts and enjoyed a significant resurgence as a result. David Howlett has recently proposed several modifications to the Finn to make it easier to sail for a wider range of body sizes, which could help move the class away from the stigma of being perceived as the 'Men's Heavyweight' class, which are worthy of consideration by the whole class.

David's suggestions include:

- 1) Reduce the weight of the boat by 2 or 3 kgs.  
Reason: Nearly all modern Finns have at least this level of correctors (up to 5kg) and there is no sense carrying around the extra weight, the boat would be nicer to sail plus removing lead would fit with WS sustainability goals.
- 2) Along with above, reduce the Radius of Gyration  
Reason: It seems counter intuitive to have to have lead weights at the transom.
- 3) Reduce the weight of the mast by 500gms  
Reason: Most modern carbon Finn masts have at least 500gms of corrector weight and there is no reason other than the Rule to have this.
- 4) Take out the Center of Gravity of the mast rule (and the requirement for corrector weights to be above deck)  
Reason: The boat would sail better and the mast would look better without a mass of lead stuck on the front of the mast at the current centre of gravity. Historically the masts were from wood and Aluminium at 10.5kg but with the introduction of carbon masts the C of G was never changed.
- 5) Allow carbon booms and reduce the weight of the boom and fittings to 3kg  
Reason: The Finn Class has always moved with the times and the Masters, who will probably be the majority of the sailors in future would accept the cost to have stiffer, lighter and more rounded on the bottom (fewer cut heads!) booms. Spar manufacturers have confirmed that using an existing carbon section would not prove much more expensive.
- 6) Allow the hiking pads to be wider than the current Rule of 10mm - maybe up to 30mm  
Reason: Increase Righting Moment to make the boat faster upwind and allow a wider range of weights to be competitive.

David comments, 'The Masters and other sailors do actually like something to discuss and give themselves ways to improve their boats. The costs of these changes are relatively small but the gain in performance and look could be significant. Hopefully Rickard Sarby would

appreciate how well his design has endured over 70 years and could be even better with these changes. It seems that along with Covid, single handed sailing is increasing in popularity and now is a good time to win more converts to the Finn'.

David emailed his well thought out suggestions to the IFA Technical Chair who was very supportive and even suggested a further weight reduction by moving to an 8kg composite centreboard, but does beg the question of why has the Technical Committee not been thinking about such developments previously? We would ask the Technical Committee to consider these suggestions carefully and perhaps look to phase them in over a scheduled period, giving sailors plenty of time to prepare and plan their equipment purchases. Making the boat easier to sail by a wider range of body weights would increase the universality of the boat to World Sailing and could even lead to it being sailed successfully by taller women athletes.

It is the belief of many of the British Finn Association's members that the current IFA Executive appears dysfunctional, lacks leadership, has conflicts of interest and has no post-Olympic plans for the class. The future of this great class is at risk and the BFA plans to write to the IFA executive to seek answers to these questions and to demand a root and branch overhaul of the organisation and its leadership. It would be good to have more constructive ideas for the future of the class from other NCA's that together we can present to a new IFA Executive. Maybe you have a good candidate willing to take the helm and provide the vital leadership the IFA requires? All the NCA's should have a voice and we need to start using them now.

We are all very privileged to sail and be involved in organising the Finn class in our own countries. We have a duty to leave the class in a better state than when we found it, to further the legacy of all those names listed in the IFA Hall of Fame. There was much goodwill and sympathy for the Finn in the media and amongst sailing administrators when the WS decision to drop the class from Paris 2024 was made, so now is the time to act if we aiming for re-selection, before the great Olympic heritage of the International Finn Class is forgotten and passes into history. In the interest of the Finn class worldwide please join us in challenging the IFA Executive to act now and provide a strategic plan for the future of the class.

With best regards

John Heyes – Chairman

Martin Hughes – Secretary

Ray New – Treasurer

British Finn Association

