

HARBOR 20s SAILING PHRF & PORTSMOUTH? CHECK IT OUT

July 6, 2010

There are over 300 Harbor 20s sailing throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Australia. Of these, about 50 are racing in one-design fleets. This number is growing as new fleets are added, but this still leaves a good number of Harbor 20 owners who race handicap.

A recent query to the class through its Yahoo Group resulted in some intriguing dialogue and a great article written by a seasoned Harbor 20 PHRF sailor.

Boat	Rating	Elapsed	Corrected
Harbor 20	249	3468	2467
Albe 24	266	3539	2470
J24	194	3375	2595
M24	244	DNC	DNC
Tartan 37	167	DNC	DNC

IT ALL STARTED WITH:

Greetings from Gull Lake Yacht Club, in Michigan!

Can any of you help me? Our club uses the Portsmouth rating system and the Harbor 20 comes in at 92.0, 92.9 with a spinnaker.

As background, I have sailed for over 40 years in both one design and with this same Portsmouth System, with a J/24. Either I still have not gotten the boat to move as well as it should or the rating is unfair to the Harbor 20.

I would appreciate any comments!!!

Thanks,
John W. (Jack) Lawrence, # 278, JOLA Plus
Gulf Lake Yacht Club, Michigan

A GREAT RESPONSE:

U S Sailing uses a formula relating PHRF to Portsmouth (DPN):

$$\text{DPN} = \text{PHRF} / 6 + 55$$

Therefore a PHRF rating of 225 implies a Portsmouth rating of 92.5. Or, 92.0 Portsmouth implies 222 PHRF. Don't know how well the numbers actually relate since the rating concepts are quite different.

Lee Sutherland (#48)
Newport Beach, CA

A SWITCH TO PHRF TALK:

Info to all,

The West Florida PHRF has assigned a PHRF rating of 249 to Bill Hart's H-20 (#173) in Punta Gorda, FL. He recently finished first in a race that included a J/24. My Colgate 26 rates 176 (non-spinnaker, 155 genoa) and sometimes he beats me on corrected time, especially in light air.

Bill Wilkinson
H-20 # 296
Maine

For what it's worth our PHRF rating (on San Francisco Bay) is 234 (negotiated down from 210!) In club beer can racing we rarely finish off the podium against boats up to 42ft+. On short races with variable conditions we usually beat all the bigger boats - but not the Cal 20s and Rhodes 19s as it is hard to save time against them. Longer races, it is the opposite.

I don't know where SFYRA came up with the 210 rating - but I did an online search to look for H20 PHRF ratings elsewhere (Hilton Head, Newport Beach, San Diego etc.) and came up with the following from San Diego:

San Diego PHRF Handicapping Board

1. Harbor 20 *Bluechip* (145)
 - 1.1. Racing in CRA at 234 – rating assumes racing in Class 5 against spinnaker boats
 - 1.2. Recommend 234 and Category 4 racing only (Class 6)*
 - 1.3. Motion approved for 234/234/234
- *(Class 6 is Buoy Rating greater than 177+)

Accordingly I asked our club for a revision to 234 which they granted. Giving Cal20s and Rhodes 19s almost a minute a mile TOT was asking a bit too much.

John Colver
Sail# 226
Belvedere, CA

John, I think I got a raw deal.....a few months ago I received my PHRF rating for the San Francisco Bay at 210. That's a heck of a difference from your 234. The people that compute the ratings must have been in a bad mood that day. But I can't complain because in heavy or light wind I've managed a podium finish in every beer can race I've entered since buying the boat in March.

Lee Perry
Sail # 299

A GREAT ARTICLE:

Sailing a Harbor 20 in PHRF

Bill Hart, Harbor 20 #173 "Rockn' Chair"

In PHRF, where virtually anything is legal as long as you are willing to be handicapped for it, it can be tough sledding for a boat limited to one-design parameters.

In a December 2008 article in the Harbor 20 News. I recounted our early experience racing my Harbor 20 in PHRF. The boat had been slightly modified in order, hopefully, to optimize the sails and rig for PHRF competition. Recently, Tom asked how things were going.

I am pleased to report that we have had some modest success, and our experience has confirmed that our Harbor 20, as optimized, can be quite competitive in PHRF racing against similarly rated boats.

Following are some observations based on our experience:

Upwind

It is said that a stock (class legal) H20 is as fast upwind as any other 20 footer. But, is that fast enough for PHRF? A more pertinent question might be: Everything else being equal, is a stock H20 as fast upwind as, say, a quick little Ranger 23 flying a 155% genoa, which in that configuration carries the same PHRF rating as a H20? In that case, I believe the advantage might be with the Ranger 23 because a stock H20 provides only limited capability to control jib twist and draft while underway. As I noted earlier, seeking to improve our competitiveness, I lowered the Hoyt boom four inches closer to the foredeck and replaced the Class jib with a slightly larger "blade" which features an enhanced roach stabilized by vertical battens. Then I installed additional control lines which enable underway leech control through jib boom vang and, also, replicate the draft control of a conventional jib sheet traveler. Those modifications carried no rating penalty and definitely appear to be worthwhile.

Reaching

Good news! My modified H20 is very fast on a reach. (Maybe they all are). When reaching we can keep up with most everybody, regardless of size or handicap, and often pass quite a few. On beam reaches we often play catch up, big time. For example, in a recent race we reached for several minutes side by side with a J22, which was flying its spinnaker and giving us a ton of time.

Running

Not so good news. Dead downwind is a challenge. We haven't settled on any really ideal way to deal with other boats sailing deep with their 155% genoas poled out on outrageously long whisker poles. Unless there is very good pressure, sailing deep with our little jib is comparatively slow and the wing-on-wing configuration can be tedious, even with the wingers employed. Fortunately, our courses are rarely perfectly square to the wind and on runs we are often able to sail a little high on the headed tack until the apparent wind is at least a broad reach. This usually produces much better boat speed, at the expense of some extra distance, and can avert total disaster. The big roach on the mainsail also probably helps a bit.

Reefing

Although the H20 is a very stiff boat, occasionally we find it advantageous to reef upwind and then shake the reef out when sailing off the wind. Wind loads can be considerable in reefing

conditions; and to facilitate getting the main back up, I have cantilevered a small winch from the control panel, directly in front of the main halyard. The winch is used for no other purpose.

Furling

I'm ambivalent about roller furling for such a small jib. I'm ready for new sails and am considering jib hanks, even though that would reduce my rating three seconds (indicating a faster configuration). But hanks might be worth more than the penalty because of increased luff length, reduced weight aloft and the added capability to adjust luff tension while underway. For takedowns, it wouldn't be hard to lean forward from the mast and yank the jib down by its leach. Nothing would go in the water because the sail remains attached to both the forestay and boom, and the folds would not exceed the width of the foredeck. I haven't yet made up my mind on this.

Musings

I wonder what would happen if I eliminated the Hoyt boom and converted to a hank-on 105% deck sweeping genoa with the sheets led to the winch I installed? Hmmm..... Nah. Forget it.

That about sums it up. I certainly wouldn't recommend that anyone "cob up" their beautiful Harbor 20, but as a PHRF racer I feel that in our case the changes were fruitful. Of course, all the usual caveats about good sails, boat preparation, tactics, etc. are applicable. And laser-like concentration is required if you expect to save your time against the more experienced competitors.

The bottom line is: In our fleet of over 40 boats, my Harbor 20 is respected as a scrappy little contender - a boat to beat. She's loads of fun to sail and has brought home more than her fair share of trophies.

Bill Hart, Harbor 20 #173 Rockn' Chair