The purpose of any Yacht Rating Rule is to provide an equitable basis for the racing of yachts of a particular type and thereby encourage the building of new yachts to that Rule.

It is clear that assembling so many distinguished delegates from the yacht racing nations of Europe, in London in January 1906, was a great triumph of diplomacy for Brooke Heckstall Smith, who had followed Dixon Kemp as Secretary of the Yacht Racing Association. We might note that the YRA itself had only been established in 1875 and the other 'National Authorities' were also in their infancy. In April 1904 Mr Heckstall Smith had drawn "the attention of German, French and British yachtsmen to the fact that the yacht measurement rules (then different in the various countries) were generally due to terminate about the end of 1907, and suggested that many advantages would accrue if an International Rule could be agreed upon"

That the resulting conference should have been held in London was only appropriate as the number of UK racing yachts listed in Lloyds Register at that time outnumbered those of all other nations combined. That the sequence of conferences held was able to achieve consensus amongst such a disparate group by June of the same year was also most remarkable. One has the feeling that in the age of the Internet such would be quite impoosible.

As with any new yacht rating formula, the International Rule was intended to benefit from the experience of previous Rules had proved 'less than watertight', and provide a sound framework for the future of the Sport of Yacht Racing on an International basis. In particular, it would enable yachtsmen from Northern Europe to take part in regattas on the Riviera without being required to have their boats re-rated to a local Rule governing those races. Also it was intended to promote the building of large yachts of a 'healthy' type along the lines of the G.L.Watson designed 'Britannia' model of 1893. It should be noted that the formulation and discussion of novel Rating Rules was a popular topic in the correspondence and editorial columns of UK yachting journals of those times.

One of the principal instigators of an International Rule, R.E. Froude FRS , (son of William Froude, the 'father of Naval Architecture' and a most eminent scientist in his own right, as well as an enthusiastic yachtsman and developer of rating rules) , identified in his 1906 Paper to the Institute of Naval Architects (INA) that **'the ideal yacht'** (to be produced by the Rule) should be a vessel combining **"habitability with speed"**. The Length and Sail Area rules had ultimately led to the development of 'skimming dishes' that proved fastest in the smaller yachts and the likelihood of similar developments in larger craft was considered unsatisfactory for the future of large yacht racing, as craft of this type had to be built very lightly and retained little resale value as cruising craft, once their prime racing days were over.

Certain concepts of the International Rule came it is understood from Alfred Benzon, who was a distinguished scientist, industrialist and sportsman from Denmark. In particular he contributed, via bow and stern girth taxes, a sensible system of quantifying an 'effective sailing length' rather than just measuring a simple waterline length, and also the 'd' method of penalising hollows in the midship section to prevent 'skimming dishes'. R.E.Froude graciously acknowledged the significance of the Benzon contributions in his INA Paper of 1906, observing that many aspects of the new Rule came "from the fertile brain of the renowned Mr Benzon". It might be noted that the Universal Rule formulated by Nathaniel Herreschoff in the USA tackled the problem of assessing 'sailing length' via a quarter beam length measurement. Each method has its merits and advocates.

A fundamental but then novel requirement of the International Rule was that all yachts should be built to minimum scantlings defined by British and German Lloyds' Register, or Bureau Veritas. This was not popular with some of the designers who saw such restrictions as a denial of their art. However as subsequent history relates, no Yacht Rating Rule has stood the test of time without such scantling control

The First Rule itself was like so many things created by committees, less than perfect. In particular, it under rated sail area and tried to control displacement by taxing girth differences, however it set in motion the process whereby the very satisfactory Second International Rule was able to come into being in 1921. In this version of the International Rule a minimum displacement (without penalty) related to waterline length was defined, and Beam as a speed factor was removed from the formula. It was said of this Rule that *'For the first time in the history of yachting it appears that yacht designers are unable to make certain of defeating an old yacht, under the rules, with a new vessel'*. Surely there can be no better recommendation for a Rule…?

Finally the Third Rule of 1933 was but a minor adjustment of the Second Rule eliminating some unnecessary distortions of keel form induced by the 'G' factor, improving the method of taxing fullness of bows and it is this Rule that still governs the Class today.

It is perhaps worth noting that this "Third Rule" formulation is remarkably akin in form to the 'Seawanhaka Rule', introduced by that Club in 1882, (and adopted by the NYYC in 1890) but with the substitution of a 'Rated Length' (ie effective sailing length) for the simple LWL of the Seawanhaka formulation, combined with the introduction of a number of constraints to produce yachts of a type considered most suitable.

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