

IRC v ORC at Calves Week: What Happens When Exactly the Same Boats Are Compared?

A race-by-race recalculation removes different fleet composition from the equation - and finds that 14 of 24 boats change overall position

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[Afloat's first comparison of IRC and ORC results from Quintas Capital Calves Week 2026](#) found several differences between the two rating systems. There was, however, an obvious complication: the IRC and ORC fleets were **not identical**.

In Class 2, for example, IRC winner Swuzzlebubble did not compete under ORC. In Class 3, IRC winner Illegal and third-placed 3 Cheers likewise did not appear in the ORC results. Conversely, several boats appeared in ORC without appearing in the corresponding IRC class.

Simply placing the published IRC and ORC final tables alongside one another can therefore exaggerate - or conceal - differences between the systems.

What happens when only boats that actually competed under both IRC and ORC are retained, and the IRC results are recalculated race by race using that identical fleet?

Across the four spinnaker classes, **24 boats could be compared directly**. Of those, **14 - 58.3% - changed their overall finishing position** between IRC and ORC. In **two of the four classes, the winner changed**. This does not establish that either system is better; it demonstrates that ORC was not simply reproducing the IRC result.

How the Comparison Was Made

1. The IRC and ORC entry lists were matched by boat and sail number.
2. Only boats appearing under both systems were retained.
3. Every IRC-only boat was removed from each individual IRC race.
4. The remaining boats were re-ranked in their original IRC corrected-time order and IRC points reassigned.
5. Scoring penalties, retirements and non-starts were retained.
6. The event's one discard after four races was applied.
7. ORC-only boats were likewise removed, so both sides contained the same boats.

The filtering was symmetrical. Swuzzlebubble was removed from IRC Class 2 because it had no ORC result; Mackey G was excluded from the Class 3 ORC comparison because it did not appear in IRC Class 3.

Same boats. Same races. Same performances. Two different rating systems.

Simply deleting non-ORC boats from the final IRC series table would be mathematically wrong. If an IRC-only boat finished between two dual-rated boats in a race, removing it changes the points of every common-fleet boat behind it. The IRC series therefore had to be reconstructed **race by race**.

IRC and ORC: Why Can the Results Differ?

For readers less familiar with ORC, the two systems do not perform the same handicap calculation.

	IRC	ORC
Rating basis	Single Time Correction Factor (TCC)	VPP-based performance model
Wind strength in race scoring	Not directly	Yes
Course / sailing-angle composition	Not directly	Yes, where the selected scoring method uses course data
Boat performance representation	One TCC	Predicted across wind speeds and sailing angles
Race allowance	Same TCC irrespective of race conditions	Can reflect the wind and course sailed

IRC assigns each boat a single Time Correction Factor (TCC). The boat's elapsed time is multiplied by that TCC to obtain corrected time. The same TCC applies whether a race is sailed in light or strong wind and whether the course is predominantly beating, reaching or running.

ORC uses a Velocity Prediction Program (VPP) to predict each yacht's performance over a range of wind strengths and sailing angles. With the course-dependent scoring used at Calves Week, the calculation can reflect the wind and the composition of the course, including the differing legs sailed.

For a more detailed explanation, see the Offshore Racing Congress article ["When averages stop being fair - Understanding why ORC offers more than one way to score a race"](#).

Neither approach is described here as inherently more accurate or fair. The point is simply that **IRC and ORC are not performing the same mathematical calculation**, so there is no reason to assume that the same fleet must always finish in the same corrected-time order.

Class 0: The Champion Changes

Seven boats form the common fleet: Waterfront, El Syd, Rockabill VI, Joyride, I-Zimbra, Prima Forte and Out of Office. Cris Tina was removed from IRC and Prime Suspect from ORC.

Boat	Recalculated IRC	ORC	Movement
Waterfront	1	2	-1
El Syd	2	3	-1
Rockabill VI	3	1	+2
Joyride	4	4	-
I-Zimbra	5	5	-
Prima Forte	6	6	-
Out of Office	7	7	-

IRC gives Waterfront, El Syd and Rockabill VI as the podium. ORC gives Rockabill VI, Waterfront and El Syd. The class champion changes and all three podium boats change position.

Class 1: A Useful Control Case

The five common boats are Artful Dodger, Chimaera, Tighey Boy, Powder Monkey and Dear Prudence. **All five are J/109s**, making this an unusually homogeneous comparison: the boats are the same design and therefore have closely related performance characteristics. IRC-only Storm, Incorrect 2.0 and Kyachtic were removed; ORC-only Palomer was excluded.

Boat	Recalculated IRC	ORC	Movement
Artful Dodger	1	1	-
Chimaera	2	2	-
Tighey Boy	3	3	-
Dear Prudence	4	5	-1
Powder Monkey	5	4	+1

IRC and ORC agree on first, second and third; only fourth and fifth reverse. **That near-identical result among five J/109s is an important control case.** When the systems are applied to a group of almost identical boats, they produced almost the same championship order.

The contrast with Class 2 is particularly interesting. **Class 1's common fleet consisted entirely of J/109s and the two systems produced the same top three and only one reversal, between fourth and fifth.** Class 2, by contrast, contained a much broader mix of yacht types, sizes, generations and performance characteristics, and seven of its nine common boats changed position. This does not prove that design diversity caused the different results, but it reinforces the point that IRC and ORC can agree very closely in a homogeneous fleet while producing materially different orders in a more heterogeneous one.

Class 2: The Biggest Difference

Nine boats competed under both systems: Miss Whiplash, Ghost Raider, Prince of Tides, Black Velvet, Anteex, Bateleur 88, Ejine, Piper Sound and Ulysses. Swuzzlebubble and the other IRC-only boats were removed before IRC was rescored, so Swuzzlebubble's IRC victory plays no part in this comparison.

Boat	Recalculated IRC	ORC	Movement
Miss Whiplash	1	3	-2
Ghost Raider	2	1	+1
Prince of Tides	3	5	-2
Black Velvet	4	2	+2
Anteex	5	7	-2
Bateleur 88	6	4	+2
Ejine	7	6	+1
Piper Sound	8	8	-
Ulysses	9	9	-

Among the same nine boats, IRC gives Miss Whiplash, Ghost Raider and Prince of Tides as the top three; ORC gives Ghost Raider, Black Velvet and Miss Whiplash. The winner changes and seven of nine boats change overall position.

Class 3: Same Winner, Different Order Behind

Only Tuco, Excelsior and Manzanita appear in both relevant results. Illegal and 3 Cheers were removed from IRC; Mackey G was removed from ORC because it did not appear in IRC Class 3.

Boat	Recalculated IRC	ORC	Movement
Tuco	1	1	-
Manzanita	2	3	-1
Excelsior	3	2	+1

Tuco remains the winner under either system, but second and third reverse. Illegal's IRC victory and 3 Cheers' third place have no bearing on the comparison because both were removed before rescoring.

Four Classes, 24 Identical Boats

Class	Common boats	IRC winner	ORC winner	Same winner?	Changed
0	7	Waterfront	Rockabill VI	No	3/7
1	5	Artful Dodger	Artful Dodger	Yes	2/5
2	9	Miss Whiplash	Ghost Raider	No	7/9
3	3	Tuco	Tuco	Yes	2/3
TOTAL	24	-	-	2 of 4 change	14/24

58.3% of the directly comparable boats changed overall position. Two of four class champions changed. Yet the all-J/109 common fleet in Class 1 remained strikingly similar under both systems, while Tuco remained the clear Class 3 winner.

What About Whitesail?

Calves Week also produced IRC and ORC Whitesail results, but these should not simply be added to the four-class statistical comparison. IRC divided Whitesail into WS1 and WS2, whereas ORC used a different Whitesail grouping. The class boundaries are therefore not identical, making Whitesail useful supplementary evidence rather than part of the 24-boat like-for-like statistic.

What Does the Exercise Actually Prove?

It does not prove that ORC is better than IRC, nor that IRC is wrong when it produces a different order. Determining which system is fairest would require a broader study covering boat characteristics, wind strengths, course geometry and results across many regattas.

Calves Week answers a narrower question: **when exactly the same boats sail exactly the same races, does scoring them under ORC simply reproduce their IRC finishing order?**

The answer from Calves Week 2026 is **no**. Sometimes IRC and ORC agree closely; sometimes positions change within a fleet; and sometimes the class champion changes.

One Race, Two Results

The boats did not sail an IRC race followed by an ORC race. They sailed one race. The same start, course, race committee and finishing times produced both sets of results.

The practical question for organisers need not be whether IRC should be replaced by ORC. It can instead be: **does offering an additional ORC result provide a genuinely different competition for boats already racing under IRC?**

After removing IRC-only boats such as Swuzzlebubble, Illegal and 3 Cheers, removing ORC-only boats from the other side, and reconstructing the IRC results race by race, **14 of 24 boats changed final position and two of four class champions changed**. The all-J/109 Class 1 common fleet, however, remained almost unchanged.

That is not evidence that one rating system is right and the other wrong. It is evidence that they are not simply producing the same competition twice.

Sources: IRC race and series results from the published HalSail Calves Week 2026 tables supplied for this analysis; official ORC Scorer Calves Week 2026 results; [Afloat's 18 August 2026 article](#); and the [ORC scoring explainer](#).