

MDI Luders Class Bylaws/Rules project Fall 2016

A Very Little History – Why this project was necessary

The MDI L16 Class experienced a dramatic rebirth in the few years before and after 2000. There had been no Luders racing on the island for many years, and within 10 years there was a vibrant fleet racing with 10-15 boats. We now have over 20, and there will be more next year.

There are many factors contributing to the huge growth, one of which was the contemporary decline of most of the other L16 fleets. That created a source of boats, as fleets in Mississippi, Chicago, and Bermuda sent many, if not most of their boats to MDI. A result of having boats in one fleet that have lived in other fleets around the world is that there are more differences between the boats than in some other one-design class.

With sometimes competing interests in trying to keep the boats as similar as possible, and at the same time trying not to push any current or future boat owners away, we have consistently been exploring how to use and/or adjust the rules.

The rules we have been operating under throughout this period are laid out in a document written by and for the National L16 Class (the “Chicago document”). That document includes a section laying out bylaws for the national organization, and a section listing the class rules. It also includes a third section describing the conduct of a national championship.

When the MDI rebirth happened, the group “adopted” the national rules, and that has given us all something to look at when we have questions about the rules. It did NOT give us any framework for making decisions about changes, as the bylaws for that organization are in no way usable by a local organization. The “members” of the national organization are the local fleets, and many questions are just left to the local fleets to settle.

The situation today is that the MDI Luders class is essentially the only active racing class left in the world. I heard from one sailor in Chicago a month ago that there were two boats racing in Chicago this summer, and hopefully 3 next year, so it’s not technically true that we are the only fleet. But I have been unable, after numerous attempts, over many years, to make contact with anyone who is involved officially with the class.

It does mean that there is effectively no national organization that we can work through. And we have never put anything on paper about the organization of the MDI Class. At the last Class meeting in September, our Technical Committee presented a report which included some proposed changes to the rules. The

discussion ran into somewhat of a dead end when the question was asked, “who will vote?”

Not only do we need to have a framework now for making changes to the rules, but that need will get more critical as the class grows.

This project is the natural result of our success in growing the fleet.

How we ended up with this document

Having offered to draft new Bylaws, I started out by drafting Part I on my own. Having done this with a couple of other organizations, I know that a document that is written by multiple people can become disjointed and difficult to read. But without input from others, the first draft had numerous holes, and in places was confusing.

I then got Tom’s help in creating a committee to review and offer feedback. That group includes all of the Technical committee and Tom and Jim. I also had phone conversations with over half of the boat owners who race, and a couple that don’t race.

With the help of all of that input, the draft presented here is vastly different – and equally improved - from the one I originally wrote.

What is in the new Bylaws/Rules

In an attempt to honor the decision to adopt the national rules, we started with a plan to stay as close to that document as possible and make only the changes necessary to make it work for a local organization. The three sections in the Chicago document are Part I Bylaws, Part II Class rules, and Part III International Championship.

With a couple exceptions Part I was almost entirely irrelevant to a local organization, so we started with nearly a blank slate. Part II was mostly relevant, and represents the “rules” that we have been using, so we started with that as a template. Part III, the rules for conducting an International Championship is not appropriate to a local organization, so we ignored that section.

The initial plan was to write a new Part I Bylaws and attach it to the existing Part II Class Rules without any modifications to Part II. However, that section also included some language relevant only to a national organization, for example this from the first paragraph of the rules:

It shall be the responsibility of the local fleets to enforce rules and specifications, and each Fleet Secretary shall certify to the International

Secretary all boats belonging to his fleet, stating that they comply with these rules.

That meant we had to actually get our hands dirty in that section. And the Technical Committee recommendations presented at the September meeting were met with general approval, so it made sense to include those changes as well. In the course of discussing the result, additional recommended changes came to light.

The result is that the new document contains an entirely new set of Bylaws and the previous set of Class Rules with a few suggested amendments.

Rules Changes

In addition to the specific changes agreed to by the Tech Committee, there is some reorganizing of Part II, which is not intended to change the rules in any way, and a little rewording where it was found to be confusing. The first section which refers to local fleets was removed.

Specific changes to the rules that are included are:

The previous rules stated that any material may be used for masts as long as they conform to the original wood design in all aspects including weight. That rule was generally ignored when aluminum masts were introduced. They're all lighter and make no effort to match the wooden masts. We are recognizing that as an established fact and establishing the Zephyr aluminum mast as the standard for all new masts.

All of the original standing rigging must be kept in place including jumpers and jumper struts, upper spreaders and diamond stays, lower spreaders, upper and lower shrouds.

Fracolators will be allowed (any device to take slack out of the forestay while sailing downwind with the backstay released). Other than that and the adjustable backstays, no standing rigging may be adjusted during a race.

MDI Jibs are added as permitted sails. Genoa jibs are removed (not permitted in one-design races). These two rules changes were made years ago, but never written into the rules.

Future Revisions

Among other things, the new Bylaws establish a "Rules Committee", which is essentially the Technical Committee we have now, which will continue to make recommendations about rules if and when they seem appropriate.

That Committee, along with the officers, will be elected by the boat owners each year. That doesn't imply a turn-over each year, but it does provide for accountability. And the bylaws establish a bar of 2/3 of the racing boats as the level to be reached when changing the rules.

The goal is to allow the rules to evolve as necessary, while keeping all of the boat owners involved.