

Start line strategy – Fleet vs Pursuit race

Race starts are an important part of ensuring you have a good race, and there are a number of aspects that come in to producing a good start:

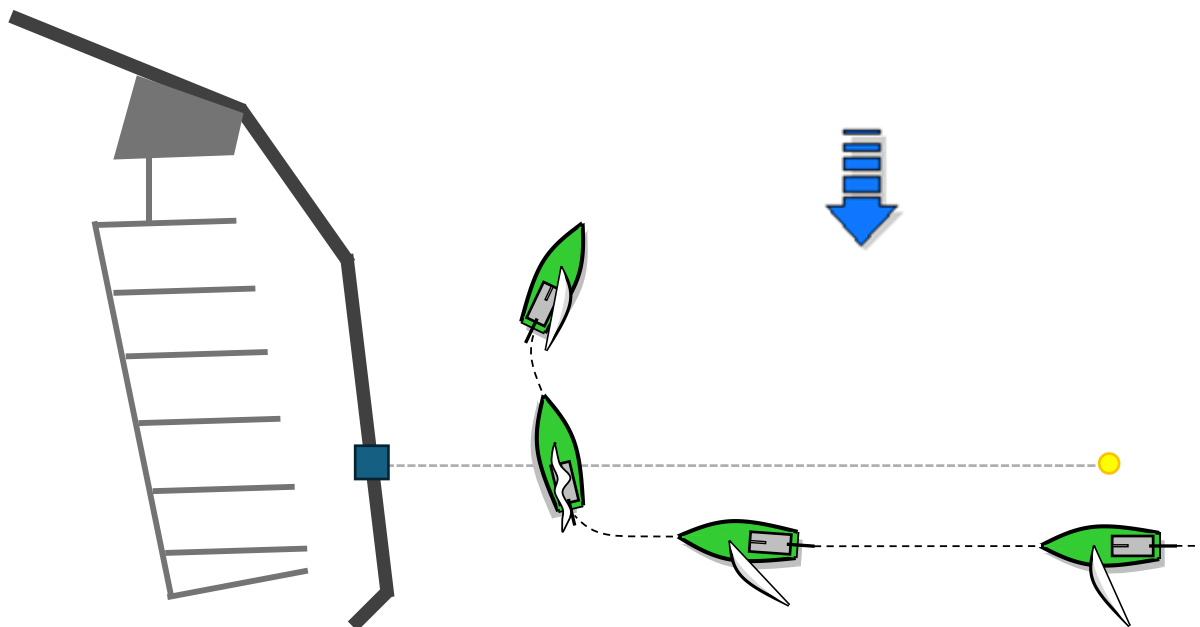
- Being on the line on time
- ... at the favoured end of the line
- ... with clean air
- ... at maximum speed
- ... and going in the preferred direction

While all of these contribute to a good start, the most important is starting on time, otherwise all the others are completely irrelevant.

And for RBYC races, the tactics you might employ are quite different depending on the type of race being run - a fleet or pursuit race.

Pursuit Start

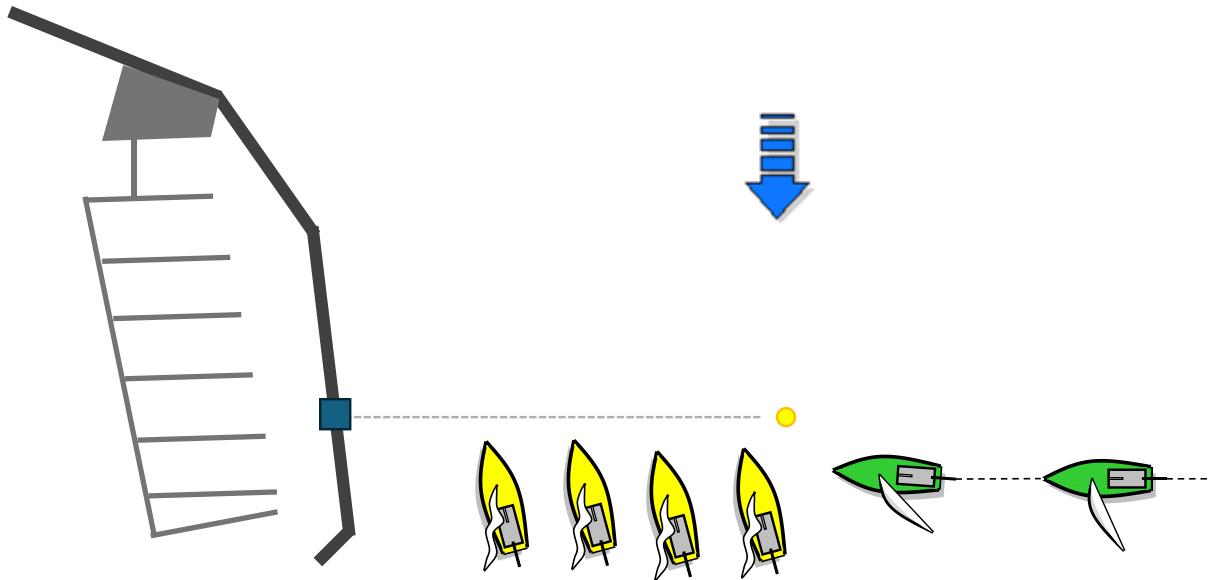
With a pursuit start, your boat will probably be the only boat starting at your start time, so being on the line is quite simple. Assuming a normal southerly breeze, the simplest and most reliable strategy for a Tower start is that you reach along the line and either harden up, or tack and cross the line at your appointed start time. This is a simple, safe and very reliable strategy guaranteeing you an on time start every time.



Fleet Start

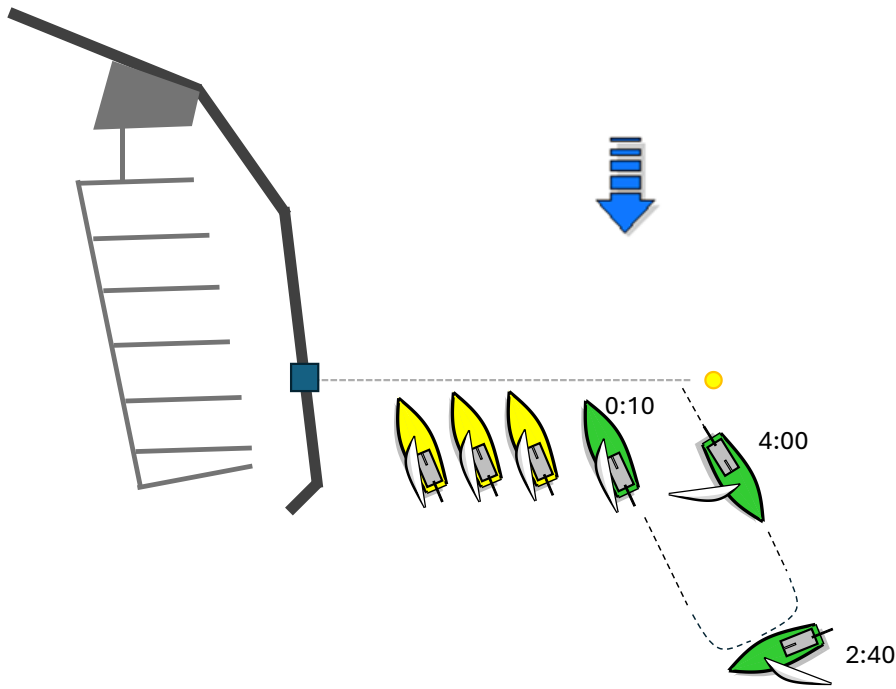
Unfortunately this approach will not work at all in a fleet start race with every boat starting at the same time. A reach down the line will cause you to meet the rest of

the fleet luffing up slowly to start and as windward boat you are required to keep clear. In the following diagram the yellow boats do not have to make any calls and the green boat as the windward boat is required to keep clear. This approach at the starboard end if the line is generally referred to as "barging" and is the quickest way to run into trouble either on the water or in the protest room.



A safer and more reliable approach is the simple "timed approach" to the line, especially in displacement keelboats where speed and timings are quite predictable. Experienced skippers will know the speed of their boat and can judge the "time to the line" just by eye. There are also now a number of freely available packages for your phone that will help you with time to the line. However, without any experience or electronics, there is a simple method to get to the line safely and on time:

- With perhaps four minutes to go to the start, sail away from the start line on a broad reach downwind on port in the opposite direction to sailing to windward on starboard
- With 2 minutes 30 seconds to go, gybe back onto starboard and head back up to the line



The four minutes may be 3 or 2 depending on the wind speed, speed of your boat, number of competitors, current etc, but basically sail away for about 40% of the time to the start and allow 60% to sail back. Once you are getting closer to the line, if you are early, you can always ease your sails or luff up to slow the boat down.

This should bring you to the line with time to burn, find a space and start on time.

The two main messages:

- While there are lots of other aspects to getting a good start, none of these will matter at all if you are not on the line on time.
- Be aware of the type of race, fleet or pursuit, and alter your approach to the line accordingly.