

What You Need to be Able to Race in the Queen's Cup Race

Have you ever thought about racing in the Queen's Cup Race? If you've wondered what the requirements might be, here's a quick summary...

First and foremost, you'll need a boat that is big enough and in good condition so that you feel secure in crossing the lake. It

could be as small as 22 feet (a J-22 for example), or as large as 40 ft or more. Obviously, the boat and its equipment and sails should be in good condition. That doesn't mean you need a full set of new racing sails, but your boat and sails should be in good enough condition to handle any weather conditions that may arise.



You will need an LMPHRF handicap certificate. This assigns a "handicap rating" for your boat, which allows the race committee to place you in the correct division and to score your boat properly. LMPHRF stands for Lake Michigan Performance Handicap Racing Fleet. The website is www.lmphrf.org. You'll find an application on the website. It requires you to provide a set of specifications for your boat. You'll find some of them in the manufacturer's literature for your boat. The application will ask you to provide measurements of your largest sails (mainsail, headsail and spinnaker). You can contact your sailmaker and ask him to provide them, or you can measure the sails yourself. The fee is \$55. Don't wait too long to apply, otherwise an expediting fee will be added. I suggest you send in your application before June 1st.

LMPHRF requires you to be a member of US Sailing before they will accept your application. You can go to www.ussailing.org to join. The annual fee is \$60. One of the benefits of being a member of US Sailing is that they will send you a copy of the rule book whenever it is updated.

Don't be intimidated by the rule book. Although it is about 150 pages long, the basic rules are all within the first fifteen pages, and most of what you need to know is in just ten pages. By the way, for just a few dollars you can download the rulebook as an "app" on your smart phone.

You will need to carry safety equipment that meets the requirements of a "Category 3 race" as defined in the ISAF Offshore Special Regulations book (available from US Sailing). While the safety equipment specifications are too detailed to list here, they include:

1. A VHF radio
2. A GPS
3. Bailing buckets
4. Life jackets and harnesses
5. Emergency flares (For the QC race, we accept a USCG flare kit)
6. A stove
7. Lifelines
8. Two bilge pumps

In general, all of the items specified in the book are things you want to have on your boat so that you feel comfortable about crossing Lake Michigan. A life raft is not required, although I carry one on my boat.

Not required, but highly suggested is a set of charts for the start and finish locations.

When you register for the race, you'll need to provide proof of liability insurance with a minimum of \$300,000 in coverage. (Make sure your insurance policy covers you if you are racing.) I call my insurance agent and ask him to send me a copy of the declarations page of my policy, showing that it is paid up through the dates of the race.

With your LMPHRF certificate in hand, as well as your proof of insurance, you can submit your entry. This can be done on-line at the SSYC website, or on paper. Simply call the SSYC office and ask for a copy of the Notice of Race packet. (The documents in this packet are also available in the Queen's Cup section of the SSYC website.) The entry deadline is one week prior to the race (but please don't wait until the last minute).

Once you've entered, you must also register. Registration must be done in person, by any member of your crew, on the Thursday or Friday before the race. Registration opens at 11 AM on Thursday and closes at 5:30 PM. It opens again on Friday morning and closes at 3 PM. If you do not register (where we verify that all of your paperwork is up-to-snuff) you will not be scored for the race. You will receive a copy of the Sailing Instructions, scheduled start times, etc. when you register.

Then, it is just a matter of assembling your crew, throwing together a bit of food, and stocking up with appropriate beverages. Dust off your navigation skills and set a waypoint for the finish buoy in your GPS.

Now you're ready to head for the starting area, check rule 26 in your rule book for the starting sequence and listen to the announcements by the race committee on your VHF radio. As long as you don't cross the starting line before the gun for your section, you're off and racing.

After you finish the race go to the Race Committee finish table and turn in your Finish Report (included in your race packet).

And, above all, have a great time before, during and after the race!