

Open letter to the Members of the International Laser Class Association. I couldn't have said it any better. Feel free to write if you have any questions about the vote. Thank you, Andy Roy

Dear Fellow ILCA Members,

As you may all be aware, the ILCA has recently sent out a vote to remove from the Class Rules the requirement that a builder must have the rights to use a Laser trademark. This rule change has arisen from World Sailing's need for all Olympic Classes to allow any interested and qualified manufacturer to build Olympic equipment. If there are any licenses required, those need to be issued to new builders on a Fair, Reasonable and Non-Discriminatory (FRAND) basis.

Until recently, the Laser has been built and supplied by three major builders; Laser Performance (LP), Performance Sailcraft Australia (PSA), and Performance Sailcraft Japan (PSJ). Although simplified, these companies all own the rights to the "Laser" trademark and brand in the territories they supply – Japan and South Korea (PSJ), Oceania (PSA) and the rest of the world (LP).

In order for the Laser to comply with the World Sailing FRAND policies, the three builders need to reach an agreement to allow other builders to sell boats called "Lasers" in their territories, for a licensing fee.

They also need to reach this agreement by the 1st August.

There are significant disagreements between the builders about the amount of the licensing fee. Put simply, PSA and LP are at loggerheads and have been fighting each other in and out of court for over a decade.

The bottom line is, if the builders are not able to agree to a FRAND policy in the next three weeks, the Laser will be kicked out of the Olympics.

There is, however, an alternative solution to the licensing fee conundrum. The Laser is a commercial brand, and the class rules require that a builder "has the rights to use the Laser trademark".

But what if we were to change that? This is what the most recent rule change is suggesting. If the rule change is passed, the following will be achieved;

- New builders will be able to enter the market as they will not need to have a trademark agreement with the other builders.
- Supply will be improved throughout the world as more builders enter the market.
- Increased supply can encourage more people to sail the Laser, giving us more people to race against.
- The Laser will be guaranteed to remain as an Olympic class, through compliance with World Sailing's FRAND policies.

So what's the only downside to voting "yes"? The boats and equipment supplied by new builders will not be sold under the brand name "Laser".

Will they still be able to race at all Laser events? Absolutely.

Will they be 100% class legal? Absolutely.

Will this mean that the name of the class and regattas will have to change from the "Laser"?

Open Letter to All Laser Class Members

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Absolutely not.

ILCA has recently signed an agreement with Laser Performance which will allow them to continue using the word "Laser" for all events, and matters relating to the class association into the foreseeable future.

Now some of you might be asking, "why bother making all these changes just to keep the Laser in the Olympics?"

Whilst I agree that the Laser would be a strong class without the Olympics, if the Laser were no longer in the Olympics, I can see at least 200+ Olympic campaigners ditching the Laser to pursue their Olympic dream in another class.

Not only that, but the Olympic dream is one of the main drivers behind youth participation in the Laser. I'll be the first one to admit that Olympic status was a big draw card for me taking up, and continuing in the Laser. I'm sure that many other youth and Olympic campaigners will say the same.

If the Olympics were held in another class, eventually the WS Youth Worlds would adopt that class as their single-handed equipment, and the entire youth sailing landscape would shift slowly to that equipment.

Further, the Laser is the only equipment which allows Olympic participation at a global scale. During the recent World Sailing Olympic Equipment decisions, a number of countries said that they would not be able to continue Olympic sailing without the Laser.

In addition, Olympic status increases the amount of technique development and second hand equipment available around the world, leading to higher quality and more competitive racing for all.

So my call to you, ILCA members, is to vote 'yes' to guarantee the Laser has a spot in the Olympics. If the rules are changed and the builders still reach an agreement, great, nothing changes, but a 'yes' vote is the only way to ensure our great class stays Olympic.

Cheers,

Dan Self

Laser Sailor, Laser Dealer and Queensland Laser Association Vice Chairperson

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