



Steering
the Course 
Women's Sailing
Festival

Snipe Women Raising Numbers

Case Study #1

sport / nature / technology



明海

Contents

Introduction	3
Aims of the project	4
How and why the project was started	5
Key successes	6
Changes or developments throughout the project	7
How others can get involved	8



Introduction

The Snipe Class has a long history of being a mixed class. The ideal weight for a competitive team does not encourage men weighing more than 72 kilos/160lbs to sail together, meaning men often need a lightweight teammate so naturally look to a female.

However, in Japan, Spain, Portugal, Southern Italy, and parts of South America, due to the average size of men being smaller, there are fewer mixed teams compared to northern Europe and North America. This has resulted in some strong female skippers and strong women's teams developing from these areas, due to there being fewer opportunities to sail mixed.

From this, the class held their first separate women's championship in Japan in 1994 and many participants quickly saw how fun and necessary separate women's events were for the health and growth of the class.



Aims of the project

The class saw a real opportunity to develop women's sailing through running specific women's championships, events and clinics, with these events also often being run by women.

"The fact that we have women organising an event exclusively for women is making the numbers grow. Women feel welcome at the Snipe Class and like to have competition adequate for women."

Paola Prada, Snipe Class Western Hemisphere Secretary.

The clinics and regattas are aimed at increasing participation and focus on the following factors:

- Low cost
- Easy charter process
- Limiting the time commitment – one day events or one/two days regattas and shorter championships allow participants to easily plan attendance
- For many attendees, a clinic or regatta is a vacation from family and work schedules, and so the class looks to include social events and relaxed on-land activities too
- Allowing last-minute participation
- Allowing sailors to come without a teammate and pair sailors together before an event
- Having both male and female coaches



How and why the project was started

The class noticed an opportunity to target sailors who may have left the sport or were reaching points in their life where sailing often sees a reduction in participation. These focuses often varied across the world, but all areas embraced returning sailors.

In Brazil, it was noted that there were three different demographics returning to or entering the class:

- **45+ women** who had had families and were coming back to sailing after organising their families in sailing or sometimes crewing for their partners. They got in touch with the bigger women's group and loved the idea to participate in women's-only championships.
- **25+ women**, sailing in classes such as the Laser, 420, Nacra, Lightning and HPE25, and were inspired by the growth of women sailing Snipes and decided to give it a try, mainly aiming for the Women's Worlds Championship.

- **14+ girls** who were coming out of the Optimists and were attracted to the Snipe Divas concept. They feel welcome in the class and usually start crewing on mixed boats and then evolve to women's only teams.

In the USA, the class identified a big drop-out in sailors leaving the sport after college. The Snipe is similar enough to the FJ/420s of high school and college/university sailing, making it a very transferrable skill. It is also manageable in terms of cost, size and complexity.



Key successes



Spain

"We are recovering many women who sailed in the past, but left the sport. We are also encouraging girls who are in the Laser or other youth classes, so that they can try the Snipe and consider it as an option for the future."

"We are attracting women to sail with us, whether in a women's or mixed team. The important thing is that they start and continue. The profile of the women is very different from that of men. The women can come when they want, but without the obligation and commitment. This flexibility makes more and more women want to join us for sailing."



Belgium

"There is big cohesion in the group of female Snipe sailors in Belgium. The amount of women keeps increasing because people see how much fun we are having. People want to be part of this enthusiastic and dynamic group."

"We focused on keeping attention on the ladies teams, such as running ladies clinics and using a separate podium for women's teams on bigger events."



USA

"We are now seeing young women, who participated in high school, returning to the class after not sailing the Snipe for five to six years. They are finished with school, and now have some money and more flexibility with their jobs."



Japan

"The class continues to grow, building on the history from the first Snipe Women's World Championships, through the university championships."

Changes or developments throughout the project

Attracting new sailors, regardless of age or gender, is a long-term project. There needs to be female role models in the fleet encouraging women, as well as women organising the events and personally promoting the class.

The support of men is fundamental. **Male sailors need to support the events too** – serving as coaches and encouraging participation. Many male sailors lend their boats and provide regatta support.





How others can get involved

Contact Class Executive
Director Jerelyn Biehl on
jerelyn@odmsail.com





Steering
the Course 
Women's Sailing
Festival

World Sailing
20 Eastbourne Terrace
London W2 6LG, UK
Tel: + 44 (0)2039 404 888

www.sailing.org

sport / nature / technology

Official Partners

