

## Chapter 1 - Predicted Log Contest

### Introduction and History

#### Introduction

Predicted logging is cruising with another purpose. Unplanned, un-plotted "line-of-sight" cruising eventually becomes boring. Worse, it allows training to get rusty. Still worse, aimless cruising does not fully prepare a boater for the emergencies that can arise while on the water. This is as true when the going gets rough as when conditions are ideal.

Let's get everybody on the same page here and understand what the words; *predicted*, *log*, and *contest* really mean. We'll turn to Webster's Dictionary for definitions.

1. **Predicted**, (pre-dik'-ted), stating what one thinks will happen. As in: "I predict it will require one minute and four seconds to go from buoy A to buoy B".
2. **Log**, (lôg), a record of progress or speed. As in "I entered one minute and four seconds in the Contest Entry form to get from buoy A to buoy B."
3. **Contest**, (kôn-test), a competitive game, race, etc. As in: "For the twenty mile contest the winner had only a four second error".

Now that we having the definition, we'll begin to use a short acronym and refer to a Predicted Log Contest simply as a **PLC**. A PLC, according to the North American Cruiser Association (NACA), consists of running a prescribed course, usually 12 to 30 miles in total length, which is composed of 4 to 10 legs, each ending at a control point. However, shorter contests can be organized, requiring perhaps only two control points in addition to the start and finish. Many other types of predicted log and speed-time-distance contests are run on the predicted log theme.

A PLC is a contest, NOT a race. There is no emphasis on speed. The entire emphasis is on *time*. PLC contestants predict (in writing and in advance) the times his/her boats will require running each leg of a particular course. All contestants make written predictions of their expected times on contest entry forms. These forms are submitted to a committee prior to starting the contest.

Then all contestants run the course. An observer on board each boat notes the *exact* time for each leg as each boat passes each control point. The differences between the predicted times and the actual times required to run each leg of the course become the error.

Here comes the tough part of a PLC. Only the observer has a time-keeping instrument. The contestants (including any other guests on the boat) have no access to time-keeping devices. The contestants' predicted times are based solely on their knowledge of how much time is required to travel a specified distance at a specific throttle setting using only the tachometer. Contestants have access to all critical engine instruments and safety equipment, but GPS is not allowed because time is an essential element in GPS operation. Radar, Loran, and other electronic navigation equipment are similarly prohibited (except in emergencies such as restricted visibility). The contestants all rely on paper charts as specified by a committee. The contests can use a compass, a pelorus, or any other non-timekeeping device

The PLC winner is the skipper with the least percentage error. Errors in each leg are cumulative; slow and fast errors do not offset each other. For example, if a skipper runs the first leg one minute faster than he predicts, and the second leg two minutes slower than he predicts, his total error is three minutes. Because each leg is an entity in itself, the errors do not offset each other. Incidentally, errors are counted in *seconds*.

Why have predicted log contests? The answer is to help good skippers become better skippers. PLCs are tests of *skill*. Predicted log contests help a skipper sharpen skills in piloting, speed controls, and boat handling. They provide opportunities for a skipper to learn about the boat and know what the boat can do under various conditions. Predicted log contests are tests of piloting, navigation and boat dependability, not contests of speed. The determining factors are careful piloting, accurate calculations of boat speed, proper consideration of wind, currents, and sea conditions — in short, applications of learned seamanship and piloting skills.

PLCs test boaters' abilities to predict accurately the time required to negotiate prescribed courses. PLCs help provide boaters with experience and confidence in boat operation under all conditions. To put this into aviation parlance, a boater who is very good at doing PLCs can be classed as having a "navigator's" license.

## **PLC History**

Predicted log contests originated in The United States on the East Coast in the early 1900s. That's when improved engines and boats stimulated a desire among skippers to compare their performances. Committees of naval architects established handicaps and controlled this type of contest initially. They established ratings based on horsepower, hull dimensions, and other factors. Predicted logging flourished when groups of boaters planned joint cruises to the same destination and decided to put their navigation and seamanship skills to the test.

By predicting their exact arrival time at several points along the way and using handicaps, boaters measured and compared their performances. Predicted logging became a source of rivalry between yacht clubs and spread to other parts of the country. For example, in 1934, a 143-mile long course involving 13 check-points between Seattle, Washington, and Nanaimo, British Columbia, attracted 61 participants representing 9 yacht clubs and 3 Sea Scout and Boy Scout groups.

To make the cruises more competitive, wagers were made, with each skipper confident of his ability to come closest to his predicted time. Wives became observers, and guests aboard the boats cheered their skippers on. As is the case with many competitive activities, rules had to be tightened over the years to ensure that every skipper stayed within the spirit of the rules.

Contest log forms such as are used today were unheard of, so the times were recorded in the ship's log, hence the name: "Predicted Log." Most present log forms are derived from forms developed by the Eastern Cruiser Association in the early 1950s. Each sponsoring organization has its own forms, but all contain the same basic information about the race and the skipper's prediction. The Long Bay Power Squadron forms included here are based on cruising along the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, crossing bays, and boating in the lakes and rivers of the Carolinas.

Once sponsoring organizations were established and uniform rules were adopted, cruising competition caught on rapidly. Clubs began to challenge each other. Today, trophies are awarded locally and nationally to individuals and clubs for superior performance. Many Squadrons and Districts of USPS, yacht clubs, and cruising associations have their own perpetual trophies. Some award "novice" trophies for beginners participating in their first contest. Novices have also been known to take home their share of the overall awards.

Today, the primary umbrella organization concerned with predicted log contests is the North American Cruiser Association. Most of the contests sanctioned each year through the NACA and its regional sub-organizations are actually conducted by various local yacht clubs. America's Boating Club, United States Power Squadrons, encourages Predicted Logging through its more than 450 squadrons and 33 districts. Predicted Logging is but another way to emphasize the axiom that "Safe Boating is More Fun."