

A PERSONAL APPROACH

by Nigel Buckley

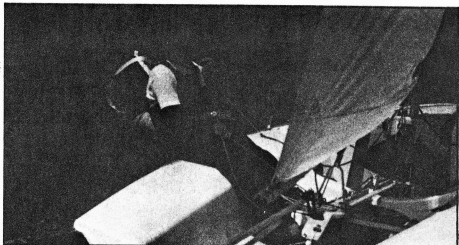
It was last December that we decided to mount a 505 campaign and then the watchword became simplicity. Simplicity in all things from boat to rig to tactics and strategy.

This approach was adopted partly because we saw potential for confusion in attempting evaluation of what makes a 505 quick. We just didn't have the time on our hands to attempt radical thinking or design and consequently we very quickly decided to work along the proven principle of the Aussie-style rig.

Our reasoning behind this was, I think, very basic. It had become apparent that the 505 sailors in Europe and the USA had been left behind by developments 'down under'. In fact the Aussies had dominated international 505 sailing for the previous three years. Yet apparently, no one had seen fit to evaluate their rigs and ask the question why!

Having spent the winter working on sail designs we felt we had, by early 1986 the answer, and had developed our own pre-bent low drag configuration set-up which we set upon the Australian Goldspar mast. Keynotes to the rig, as I think were proved, are high performance in all conditions and extreme simplicity in set-up (allowing more time for the helm and crew to attend to tactics and also saving money and weight on unnecessary and often exceedingly expensive fittings). Also the bonus of low rig tension (typically 200 to 250lbs on the shrouds) which significantly prolongs the competitive life of the hull and may even allow older boats unable to withstand the tensions associated with the stiff rigs to again become competitive.

In use, we found the mainsail to have an excellent gust response with the upper sections depowering quickly as the wind increases. The leech exit is notably straight considerably reducing drag, whilst the soft foot adjustment creates powerful sections for medium winds and offwind sailing. The jib, of course with more luff hollow that usual in order to suit the additional luff sag associated with low rig tension. As the wind increases the rig becomes self adjusting and the only adjustments made to the boat are sheeting the jib wider as the breeze increases, and the kick-



This photograph of Jim Saltonstall sailing Nigel Buckley's boat shows the clean and simple layout.

ing strap. The cunningham was largely ignored except to depower the mainsail on three-sail reaches.

The spinnaker was of a smaller area than normal and proved fast in all conditions – even in the lighter winds where its lighter weight encouraged it to fill before the more common

radial designs. A notable feature when using this sail was the considerable reduction in the amount of lee helm experienced on a three sailer and this allowed us to sail more upright than many and yet still retain a neutral helm.

Tactically our overall plan was exceedingly straightforward and

our policy was always to stay out of trouble and out of the jury room. For those with interest in this department I've included an example of our overall game plan, the purpose of which is to avoid big costly mistakes and above all to keep your head out of the boat and onto the race track.

SKELTON RACE ANALYSIS

Pre Start (together) Evaluate meteorological and tidal conditions.

Physical warm up.
and mental warm up.
Technique warm up.

Start (initially) Forget the weather mark.

Speed.
Relax.
Look around.
Maintain fleet position.

Beat Play shifts to the *fleet* – (revise meteorological and tidal conditions).
Don't gamble on first beat.

Use correct techniques for every wind and sea condition.

KEEP MOVING

Concentrate on first 2 shifts
then LOOK AROUND.

** CLEAR WIND + BOAT SPEED – then direction.

Reaches Get clear as you round.
If overlapped luff as you approach the mark.

HIGH OR LOW?

Ahead? – probably high.
Behind? – probably low.

Consider changes in windstrength.
(steady, decreasing, increasing) (gusts, lulls).
Consider headers/lifts as rounding.

WORK SAIL AND WAVES.

RUNS Consider header/lifts as rounding.
Avoid groups (reverse shadow effect).
Look for wind 'channels'.
Work waves hard.

Only by thinking clearly and knowing exactly what it is that you hope to achieve is it possible to really get to grips with the basic elements of the sailboat race so essential to success.