



Whip Your Off the Water Program in Shape

By Peter Alarie

We all know that good boat work can mean the difference between getting the boat around the course or a frustrating string of DNFs. In the last issue, I talked about a general approach to getting the yacht ready for the starting line. But it's time to get specific. Here are some of the day to day rules I try to live by. You'll find that sticking to the program may well improve your performance on — and off — the water.

BUY EXTRA: If you are replacing your spin sheets, buy another set to have on hand. If you

drop that nut into the grass, you have another at the ready. Having spares is a big time saver.

DON'T MESS WITH PERFECTION: If it ain't broke... Once you have a system working perfectly, do not change it. ANY of it. Seems obvious, but... Changes include type of line, cleat and block, as well as placement of the components. Another good reason to have extras on hand: You may not be able to find your type of line when your sheet fails somewhere in the heart of Texas.



Alarie's Tip: Smaller line is better.

LINE CHOICE IS CRITICAL: This is huge and goes with the above. A line that works with one type and size of cleat may not work as well with another. Be careful with line changes, and if your refinement is worse, go back to the old line. Jib sheets, spin halyard and pole launcher lines are important examples of this. If you are having a problem uncleating the jib, find someone who has a good system and copy their line type, size and cleat selection exactly.

USE CASCADING SYSTEMS: This is a great refinement to any purchase system, and will allow you to use less hardware, fewer purchases

and end up with a system that is easier to pull and ease. Use very small diameter, high tech lines in the early running parts of the system and easy to handle line only on the final purchase. Team Spot says you lose about 5 percent for every turn, so you can make some big gains here.

SMALLER LINE IS EASIER TO USE: Most boats that I look at have oversized lines on every system. Smaller line is cheaper, runs easier, soaks up less water and will make your "stiff" system work much smoother. Modern line is so

Prep

strong that there is no real concern with loads, so go as small as you dare.

MAKE RIGGING QUICK AND EASY: Look for ways to simplify your rigging, as this will save you time every time you go sailing, giving you more time to work on the boat!

GETTING IT RIGHT: “Never time to do it right, always time to do it twice.” Stop wasting valuable time redoing jobs. Your list is long, but it doesn’t get shorter when the same item appears at the bottom of the list again. This is my boat prep mantra.

MULTITASK: Do similar tasks at the same time. Sewing your new sheets? Cut and sew that extra set as well. Anything else on the list that requires the needle? Installing a new vang cleat? Check the other one, and tighten the ram cleat while you have the tools in your hand.

AVOID DISTRACTIONS: Turn off the phone and work through the job before stopping. It is too easy to lose track of what you are doing, leaving tasks unfinished. This is the big reason why it is impossible to be efficient in the dinghy park. A 5-minute job at home can easily take 25 at the regatta. My rule is avoid boatwork at regattas.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER: Get your partner over and assign items off the list, working towards your strengths. Think about the next job

while you are finishing the last, so you can move right to it.

DON’T GIVE UP: Your first shot at a refinement may not work. Think about why and try again. Seek advice on specific problems. There are lots of smart people out there making their boats work well. Understand the logic as well as the specifics to help you solve other problems.

OFF SEASON ONLY: Most major work to your program should be done in the off season. While boat work can be rewarding, going sailing is more fun and more productive. Don’t waste even part of the season with jobs like this.

BUDGET: Do a written budget for large projects and include all items such as fasteners and chemicals. It will cost more than you think, so if you can just barely afford it, wait until next year or reduce the scope.

PHILOSOPHY TO LIVE BY: Projects will take longer than you think. I am not breaking new ground here, but really. Estimate the time necessary and multiply by four, and then add bit more. It will take even longer than that. I am not kidding. You’ll see. Consider seeking professional help. This will add to the cost of your job, but many shops will do fixed quotes on large jobs, so you can accurately identify costs up front. The work will get done right, and you can schedule it into your sailing season and still have time to see your shrink!

