

TECHNICAL TIPS

2 – Going to windward in a chop

THESE ARE HORRIBLE CONDITIONS. Typically they occur towards the end of a race as the wind dies, when concentration may be weakening. They can be exacerbated by a windshift which makes the course on one tack head more into the waves.

A Dragon hates them because of its round, blunt, bow sections and weight. They are, however, conditions in which enormous VMG (speed made good to windward) differences can exist. Here are some tips that have worked for us.

1. Always keep speed on. The tacking angle will deteriorate badly, but unless it hits 180° you are making progress. The guy who is desperately trying to point but not moving is achieving nothing. Don't sheet in too hard. You should find that there is an angle above which the helmsman cannot point and keep going. Set the sails to that rather than the other way round.

2. Twist the sails. The gradient of windspeed relative to height above the water is apt to be greater in these conditions requiring more twist as the apparent wind is freer higher up.

It is also likely to be more veered higher up, requiring more twist on starboard tack than port, since the top of the sail will be sailing in a freer wind on starboard and will

be headed relative to the lower part of the sail on port tack.

In addition the whole rig is pitching, causing major and erratic variation in apparent wind, and lacks a constant angle of attack. At least if the sails are twisted part of the rig is always working rather than stalling out completely.

Remember to twist the genoa by easing the barber-hauler. Make sure the kicking strap is off, and, if necessary, open the leech with the backstay.

3. Roll tack. Really go for it to keep way on through and after the tack.

4. Don't sheet in too quickly after tacking, and ease the mainsheet as you tack. The top of the main particularly will stall badly unless the sheet is eased quite a lot until speed has built up again.

5. Many boats will try to point. You can only pass them to leeward or on the other tack.

6. Keep still and use minimum helm. If the boat is properly set up, the rudder will feel as though it is flopping around, yet the boat will keep tracking.

7. Remember that these conditions are hell for everyone else and that it can be very satisfying if they are properly handled.

*Note to helmsmen – for clarity:
DO NOT LOSE YOUR COOL and blasphemy, it does not make for good team work. MG*

Patrick Gifford (and Mary)

BDA YOUNG PERSON'S REPRESENTATIVE

Matthew Armstrong defines the role

I AM DELIGHTED, at the age of 32, to take over, from Katie Cole, the role of Young Person's Representative for the BDA.

The Crews Union has been overlooked for the past few years...

For those of you who don't know me, I have been racing Dragons for the best part of 10 years on the waters of the Solent crewing for Richard Jordan. He is actually younger than me so if I have to represent people

like him then I reckon I'll have plenty to do.

Having spent some time over the past few months trying to work out what the role involves, it seems quite clear that no-one really knows what the brief is. Therefore I thought the best way forward was to define the role.

It is clear that young people are the future of the class – I remember in my late teens and early twenties sailing in J24s and the number of people of the same age was very noticeable.

The superb quality of racing that is available to Dragon sailors in the UK is, although an excellent motive, not a guarantee that

new young blood will join the fleet. In my view, the role should be targeted towards the crews, both young and old, encouraging new people to join the class, making people feel welcome both on the water, and, sometimes more importantly, off it.

The Crews Union has been overlooked for the past

few years and I intend to rectify that with immediate effect.

The Dragon Class has always been known for its great racing and great parties – once word gets round that us Dragon sailors are a good friendly social bunch then new faces will follow.

BOATS FOR SALE

Large numbers of Dragons are advertised for sale on the BDA website together with trailers, gear and equipment, and wanted ads

www.britishdragons.org