Sailing Tip Sheets 2004

By Gay Morris CYCE

This year, in the spirit of instruction, improvement and participation, I am initiating this new section of the Newsletter devoted to tips on how to sail fast. Of course, I am no authority, (I am just willing to mouth off, and hey, I write the newsletter). For authoritative sailing instruction read books and magazine articles on our sport. I will start with general tips on heavy weather sailing. We sail a lot in light air, but at this time of year we are due for the windy, rough conditions.

March

Strong breezes, Heavy weather, Windy days

Safety First! Do your boat preparation. Make sure your lifelines are bulletproof. Check all your rigging. Make sure all pins are in and all the gear works correctly. Make sure all crew members wear life jackets and have comfortable raingear to keep warm and dry. Do not feel bad about not going out or giving up if there is too much wind. It is better to save your boat for a better day, than to take chances.

Rig the boat in the harbor. Know the weather report and recent observations. Guess on the proper headsail. Rig reef lines for the mainsail at the dock. Make a preliminary call as to whether or not you will fly a spinnaker. Rig the sheets and guys at the dock.

Upwind Sailing: When your boat is overpowered, good helmsmanship really pays off. Learn how to keep your boat flat using steering techniques such as feathering in puffs and steering up or down to avoid the big waves. Use good sail trim to go fast and keep the boat flat. Use smaller jibs before reefing the mainsail. Move the jib leads aft to flatten the headsail. Tighten the jib halyard to keep the draft forward and leach open. Your mainsail outhaul should be all the way tight to flatten the bottom of the main. The main halyard should be tight to keep the draft forward. Lower the main traveler, especially in puffs. Do not over-trim the main. Backwind in the main is okay. Concentrate on the leach. Sometimes all you need is a fraction of the mainsail working to point high and keep moving fast. If you are still overpowered, ease the jib sheet a little.

Reaching: Most important thing is to not drag the rudder through the water. Keep the boat flat and balanced by easing the main and boomvang, and not over trimming the jib. Sail low in the puffs and high in the lulls.

Running: Go fast. If your boat will not surf or plane, sail straight to the next mark to minimize distance. By not reefing your main you are instantly faster downwind. Push the boat. Put as much sail up as you dare. Spinnakers are always faster. Steer a lot to keep the boat under control. Concentration helps and so does having your crew call puffs. If the boat is tending to round up, ease the mainsheet and boom vang and have your crew ready to instantly ease the spinnaker sheet a lot. If you are tending to round down or

death roll, do the opposite--tighten the mainsheet, boomvang and spinnaker sheet, while easing the guy forward.

Conclusion: Windy days are fun. Just make them safe. Try to get comfortable in whatever conditions you face. Sailing is a physical sport and sailing in a breeze is a lot of work. The more physical work you put out (i.e. pain you feel), the faster you go. Try and try to learn how to sail your boat fast when over-canvassed. In my book the best sailors in the world sail Olympic Class Star boats, 49er dinghies and Australian 18 footers. These boats are all grossly overpowered in any kind of breeze.

April

We will continue each month with a new topic. These Tip Sheets are not just for racers. Whenever any of us goes out on the water, we try to use and learn good seamanship. We strive to make the sail enjoyable for everyone on board. Whether you are racing, day sailing or cruising, a safe, swift, comfortable passage is the goal. This month's topic is about the ever present tactical decision to tack or not to tack. If only sailing were so simple.

To Tack or not to Tack

Reasons not to tack : In other words, to proceed on whatever tack your boat is on.

- You are on the closest tack to the mark or your destination.
- You are sailing the long leg to the mark.
- You are sailing towards a header. A header is a wind shift where the wind comes more in your face. It follows that if you tack on a header you will be lifted, which is good.
- You are heading towards an area of water with more favorable current.
- You are heading for flatter water. This assumes that you will not be sailing out of a region of favorable current. Remember that sailing in rough water upwind is sometimes good because there is often more favorable current where the water is rough.
- You are lifted and will probably be lifted enough to lay the mark, the finish line or your destination.
- You are not lifted. But boats to windward and behind you are. Patience! You will be lifted soon and be right back in control.
- You are happily on port tack and some boat comes across hailing "Starboard"! If you want to keep going right, simply ease the mainsheet and take that boat's stern. A very famous sailor who used to sail off Edmonds once said, "If you have to take someone's stern, you are ahead of them". He was right, think about it.
- You have nice clear air, and tacking would place you in another boat's wind shadow.
- Your boat slows down a lot while tacking. Minimizing tacks is often good. This strategy seems to work for large heavy boats.

- You are on starboard tack and other boats are behind and to windward of you. If you tack, you will be on port and foul a boat or boats on starboard tack. You are pinned, have patience.

Can you think of more reasons to not tack?

Reasons to Tack : Ready about?…. Helms a'lee!

- The other tack will put you closer to the mark, finish or destination.
- You are approaching the lay line. There is clearly more distance to be covered on the other tack. Going all the way to the lay line is always slow. More on that in later.
- You have been headed. It looks to be a solid, filling header. Tacking on a header almost always gets you to your destination more efficiently.
- You are sailing out of favorable current and into adverse current.
- It is getting shallow. Know how much you draw and the minimum number you want to see on the depth sounder. Know the underwater topography and do not take chances.
- You see boats behind and to windward get headed. You are now clearly ahead of them. It is time to tack and consolidate your gain. Spending your lead to consolidate a gain almost always works.
- You are in disturbed air and feel a tack will clear your air and put you in a better position. Sometimes bad air is just a fact of life and you have to live with it.
- You are leading a race or ahead of someone you want to beat. You are crossing the competitor. Cover him. Cover, cover, cover is an old rule. Nice guys do not always win.
- You are approaching the VTS lanes and a big ship is coming. This is true for ferries too.
- A boats calls for sea-room and asks you to tack.

Can you think of some more good reasons to tack?

One last thought. What if you cannot make up your mind? In this case, simply give yourself the "two-minute rule". Continue on for two minutes or so. Then re-evaluate the situation. Tacks are slow, are hard on the crew and wear out your sails. Make them count.

May

Boat speed in Medium Air

The wind is blowing between 7 and 12 knots. Perfect conditions! You have your two best sails up, your main and #1 genoa. The topic is how to generate pure, unabridged, naked, unfiltered, unadulterated - boat speed, upwind. This may be the holy grail of

sailing. A tenth of a knot advantage over your competitors is priceless. It will allow you to point higher and get you clear air sooner. It can get you to a new wind or to a helpful wind shift before the next boat. Most importantly, it can make tactical decisions much easier. There is a definite correlation between superior relative boat speed and better tactics. Every boat can be sailed faster.

How do you sense boat speed? You can watch your instruments carefully. However, a better way is to judge your performance relative to other boats. Try to develop a "seat of the pants" feel for boat speed. Listen to the bow wave. Watch those bubbles passing your lee rail and trailing out past your stern. Use all your senses and be your own instruments.

There are three basics you have to do to prepare your boat. They pertain to bottom, weight of the boat and sails. The simplest way to better speed is to get your bottom, keel and rudder smooth and to keep them smooth. Useless weight slows a boat down. You need safety gear, tools and everything else that makes your boat a proper yacht aboard. But beyond that it is a simple fact that dead weight is slow. Putting the boat on a diet is an extremely cost effective way to go faster. The crew's weight does not matter because they can be moved around to your advantage. Sails are your engine. Their shape and trim are paramount. It is a material world and money does equal boat speed. You have to take advantage of recent technological advances in materials and sail design. Kevlar is cheap (The military demands a lot of it). The #1 genoa and mainsail are by far the most important sails on a boat. They are where the money needs to go.

There is nothing wrong in our sport with copying other boats. No need to reinvent the wheel. Rig and tune your boat like the fast guys. Ask questions. Sail on the faster boats and learn what experienced skippers are doing. Ask your sail maker to sail with you. The rig is important. Minimizing weigh aloft and reducing parasitic drag is the goal. Today's aramid lines make halyards that are significantly lighter than the older stainless steel.

Good helm technique in moderate air is to not steer much. The boat herself needs to generate speed. Any movement of the rudder acts as a brake. Hold the helm firmly and keep the boat steady. In the lighter, shiftier winds the helmsman should sit to leeward and concentrate on the genoa telltales. The helmsman must seek out any lift and point high while keeping the boat going her fastest. Also he must read the headers and drive the boat off in them. In the upper ranges, sitting to windward, allows the helmsman to see the water ahead of the boat. There are always areas of flat and rough water. Waves slow a boat down. A good helmsman can sometimes sail around the bigger waves, thus keeping the rig and boat steadier. Generally, a helmsman should be pointing high in the flat spots. Then he should gain speed to punch through unavoidable rough spots.

A slight weather helm is good (3-4 degrees). This gives the rudder more lift. Too much weather helm induces drag. The correct amount of heel is key for optimum boat speed. Most keel boats like about 10-15 degrees of heel. I think that a boat slightly heeled allows the keel to have an optimum angle of attack. Without enough heel you will not

get maximum lift off your keel. Too much heel will result in too much lift and therefore, extra drag. Some people call this "sailing the keel". Remember that your boat has more sail power when flat because that is when the rig is presenting the maximum projected area to the wind. Most skippers error on the side of too much heel.

Control heel with crew weight, sail trim and helming. Teach your crew to feel the boat. They need to hike hard when the boat tips and lean in when the boat is too upright. Generally, upwind your crew should sit close together and keep their weight low. This seems to make the boat faster through waves. Mainsail leach tension seems to have the largest effect on heel. Sailing is a game of inches and just inches of mainsheet can flatten the boat out or make it heel too much. A good benchmark for mainsail trim is to look straight up the mainsail from under the boom and trim in only until the boom and top batten are parallel. I like telltales on the mainsail leech. They should all be flying except the top one. It should fly about half the time. The helmsman needs to feather the boat to windward when there is too much heel. Likewise, he needs to drive off when the boat feels too flat. With more speed, more lift is generated causing the boat to heel more. This balancing act or "keeping her in the groove" requires supreme concentration on the part of the helmsman.

There is nothing like "time in the boat" to get faster. Sail a lot and try to gain the sense of speed. Can you remember back to a race when you got the sense that your boat was really moving? I mean just flying. It is a great feeling. These are magical moments and are very hard to duplicate. Strive for them. If we all had the choice of either being very smart sailors or being very fast sailors, I hope you would pick the latter.

June

Starting

One could write endlessly about starting in the sport of sailing. Let's just go through a few generalities, a few rules and think through an imaginary start.

As anyone who has ever sailed a yacht race knows, the start is extremely important in how a boat does in a race. In our typical leisurely race off Edmonds, the start counts for maybe 25-30% towards how well a boat does in the final corrected results. A decent start gets you instantly ahead of your competition, gets you going in the right direction and gets your crew excited so they work hard the rest of the race. A good start can get your boat to the first beneficial wind shift ahead of the fleet. It is a fact - **the rich get richer**. It is so true in our sport.

Here are some general ideas to think about:

- Starting is very challenging. It can be very imposing and stressful to beginning racers. After all, we all are putting our boats on the line, but with effort and experience comes improvement. With more starts under our belts, confidence will build. After time, starting becomes fun.

- The theory of good starting says, be going full speed with clear air, in the right direction, on the line at the gun. Another theory says that the game really is where you are two minutes after the start. Starting is infinitely dynamic and complicated.
- Timing is everything. Speed equals distance divided by time. Learn how to adjust your speed. To go fast lay the boat down on a close reach. To slow down, ease the sails a lot, (better yet back them), steer a zig-zag course or luff into the wind. Sailboats do not have brakes. It is hard to slow down.
- Time flies in light air. Boats are always late in light air starts. The lesson is stay close to the line in light air.
- Time stands still in a breeze. Fleets get to the line too early on windy days. The lesson is to hold back and concentrate on your timing. Let other boats sail away from you down the line leaving a nice hole to start in.
- Most of us sail heavy cruising boats. Our boats take a while to get up to speed. Most of us should start going for speed at least 20-30 seconds before the start, depending on the wind.
- If you are not over early once a year you are not trying hard enough. Over early means any part of you boat is across the line before the gun. It is your responsibility to go back and start correctly.
- If you get a bad start, tack as soon as you can. If the fleet ahead of you is all on starboard tack, there will be a fleet induced lift on port tack. Two minutes later and you may look good and be proud that you got a good start after all.

Here are the rules to know for starting:

- Port/Starboard- A port tack boat must keep clear of starboard tack boats. No collisions!
- Windward /Leeward- A windward boat must keep clear of leeward boats. No collisions!
- Overtaking- A yacht overtaking another must keep clear. No collisions!
- Engine- It cannot be used in the last five minutes before the start.

Here is an imaginary start:
A skipper and crew should develop a plan and predict roughly how the fleet will approach a start. Let's say it is a Summer Series race. It is a beautiful evening with an eight knot northerly blowing. You know from experience that going into the beach (going right) is good because there is a northeast shift there. The line looks square to the wind and there are about twelve boats out. Here is the plan you and your crew develop. You will start 1/3 of the way down the line on Starboard. You will approach the line on port tack and tack to starboard with a little over a minute to go. You feel that several of the fast, aggressive boats will try to start at the committee boat (the windward or right hand end of the line). You decide that you do not want to mix it up with them. You would rather compromise a little and start down the line, with clear air and lots of speed.

You stay near the line, tacking and jibing so that your crew is warmed up working the sails. At five minutes you are reaching on starboard to leeward of the committee boat. At three and a half minutes you jibe around and reach back to a point about eight boat lengths to leeward and inside the committee boat. You are on port tack, so keep a good

lookout. This is no problem. You simply head up or fall off to avoid any starboard tack boats. Just like you thought, a crowd of boats seem to be going for a committee boat end, and it is crowded up there. You keep your cool and find a place to tack to starboard with one minute and twenty seconds to go.

You are in some disturbed air from boats to windward so you drive the boat off to get going. You are headed basically to the spot 1/3 of the way down the line where you would like to start. You break onto nice clear air and see that you are early. That is okay. You head the boat up into the wind to slow down. You can do this because you are in a safe leeward position on any boats to windward of you. There are a few boats down the line from you. By luffing into the wind you increase the distance between your boat and those boats to leeward of you.

With 30 seconds to go you are about four boat lengths from the line. You have your crew slowly trim the sails in and get going faster. You say "Trim for speed" to the crew. The sails come in slowly. The boat accelerates faster with the sails being trimmed in slowly. You concentrate on the line. With ten seconds left you are almost on the line, and at the gun you are close hauled with clear air, good speed just short of the line.

The crowd up to windward is bunched up. Two boats have gotten good starts, but the rest of the crowd up there is in bad air from these leaders and you are gaining on the majority. The boats down the line are fine, but you look good on them. They were early and had to run down the line.

You concentrate on sailing fast upwind. But the two boats upwind of you are faster and will soon sail over you. Just as they appear to be taking your air, you look over your shoulder and see an opportunity. By tacking you will cross most the other boats that tried to start up by the committee boat. This is great. You tell your crew "Ready about, lets do a good one" and tack. You are on port so you are careful. Taking sterns is okay. You are in clear air and cross several boats. At two minutes after the start you are sailing fast and headed in the right direction. You are not leading the race, but you are pleased, because you see that nice puff and header in near shore and you are headed right for it.

September

Sailing in Light Air

Sailors from the Northwest are very good light air sailors. We do get a lot of it. A very famous sailor, Dennis Conner, once commented that he could not believe how successful Bill Buchan, Carl Buchan and Jonathon McKee (Olympic Gold Medal sailors from Seattle) were, when they grew up sailing in a vacuum. What did he mean by that?

I will talk about the following aspects of light air sailing: Sail trim, Crew action, Helming and Patience.

Sail Trim
Sail with everything loose. Do not over-trim your sails, particularly your genoa. The goal is to get air flowing across the sails. You need to achieve attached flow across your sail's leeward side. Attached flow means that air is flowing undisturbed without stalling across the sail. Tell tails on or near the leaches tell you if air is flowing all along the leeward side. In very light air it is hard for air to cling to the leeward sides. What seems to help is loose sails with very open leaches. A sail should twist off to leeward as your eye moves upward. To do this, keep the genoa eased. This opens up the slot between the genoa and mainsail, allowing more air through. With the mainsail, set the traveler all the way to windward and ease the sheet. Some boats have boom vangs that push up on the boom thus twisting off the mainsail. As the wind and boat speed increase, gradually sheet in the mainsail and the genoa.

Crew action
The crew should sit low and together on the low side of the boat. They should be as far forward as possible. Inducing heel and pushing the bow down is fast. Gravity fills the sails when a boat is heeled over no matter how little wind there is. Heel induces weather helm (or reduces lee helm) which is very helpful in light air. A bow down aspect not only reduces the wetted surface of your hull, but makes your boat steadier in waves. When tasks need to be done on board I always have my crew move slowly and gently. Actually, I tell the big heavy deck apes to try to move like ballerinas.

Helming
The helmsman needs to be way to leeward and forward like the crew. But he or she should also be in a position to see to windward to spot the next puff or wind shift. Sitting high on the leeward combing seems to work well on boats I have sailed. A helmsman should concentrate on the genoa's luff and try to keep the boat very steady.

It is very importantly that the helmsman not point too high. A boat needs to be moving fast before pointing becomes important. Remember the concept of "sailing the keel", that says it is just as important to have the keel moving through water as it is to have air moving past the sails. When a tack is called for, tack when the boat is moving well. Do not tack in waves. Try to be on a course parallel to large waves, not punching through them.

Patience
Patience is critical in light air. You have to give the wind time to develop and the boat time to get rolling. Do not change thing too quickly. Do not make quick decisions. One needs to develop a real liking for light air. Light air days have many advantages. They are warm. The seas are calm. Light air days are easy on your boat. There is a lot of time for you to enjoy your investment on light air days. You and your crew can see changes in the wind, (ripples on the water, drifting smoke or flags ashore) and develop strategies.

There is time to see these changes, make plans and carry them out. Doing this can be very rewarding.

I love light air because my ability to see, assimilate what is happening and perform maneuvers seems to be more in sync with the frequency of changes on light air days, than on medium or windy days.

October

Wind Shifts, Upwind

Winds are sometimes almost non existent, fickle, pleasant, glorious, challenging, fierce or dangerous, but they are always changing. Sailors spend entire careers studying wind shifts and still cannot follow them with any certainty. Wind shifts are an aspect of sailing that truly make it an art form. The purposes of this month's article are to familiarize or re-familiarize club members with some of the general characteristics and opportunities that wind shift pose to us.

First, here is some terminology to think about. A lift, or being lifted means the wind, relative to your boat is coming more behind you. A header is the opposite, the wind comes more ahead of you. To foot, is to drive the boat off and gain speed. To point is to sail as close to the wind direction as possible.

The basic rule in sailing in shifting winds is: "foot to the header". This means that you can get your boat upwind faster by driving off when you see that there is a header coming. It follows that you tack in the header and get lifted.

Picture boats sailing upwind--each boat can be thought of as being on a rung of a ladder. The boat on the highest rung is in the lead. Boats on the same rung of the ladder are even. The rungs of the ladder are always perpendicular to the wind direction. If the wind shifts one direction, the boat or boats that were sailing more toward the direction of the wind shift, not only get the shift first, but move up ladder rungs relative to boats that were sailing more away from the direction of the shift. Get a piece of paper out and draw some boats sailing upwind. Draw in the ladder rungs. Now change the wind, the boat's courses and the ladder rungs and see for yourself which boat or boats have gained.

To illustrate the "foot to the header" rule, draw another picture with boats sailing upwind. Draw a second picture showing one boat footing fast, therefore moving laterally away from the other boats. Now change the wind in the direction that that boat footed. Redraw the boats, their courses and the ladder rungs. Notice that the boat that footed toward the shift has made a significant gain---the more the lateral separation, the more the gain.

Now, to amend and expand on the "foot to the header" rule, the rule implies that you foot to the header and then tack. The corollary to this rule is "point to the lift". But better yet, tack so that you are heading for the header.

There are two types of wind shifts to think about. One is oscillating wind shifts, which are temporary or short term. The other is permanent wind shifts which are long term. Think of oscillating shifts as simply horizontal waves in the breeze. They are a fact of nature. There is a mean wind direction and the wind direction changes over time from the left and then to the right of the mean wind direction. Good sailors use their compasses, landmarks, other boats or other visual means to see where they are in an oscillating breeze. The best way to get to windward is to proceed in the lifts and to tack in the headers. Get you boat in sync with the shifts. The whole idea is to sail less distance through the water than your competitor, therefore getting upwind faster.

Permanent or long term shifts are caused by changes in the weather, such as a cumulonimbus cell passing by or a frontal passage. Also, they can be caused by geographic influences like the curvature of a shoreline or a prominent bluff. These long term shifts lend themselves very well to the "foot to the header" rule. Again the whole idea is to sail efficiently by using these wind shifts to minimize the distance sailed to windward.

One of the most difficult mental aspects of sailing is distinguishing short term shifts from long term shifts. If you can do this you are an artist. Let wind shifts be your friend. You can spend lots of money trying to make your boat faster, but the rewards from new sails, a clean bottom or whatever, will pale in comparison to sailing well in wind shifts. All it takes is a little awareness, some looking around and some thought to make any boat faster upwind.

November

Of Northerlies and Southerlies

Last month we talked about wind shifts in a textbook style. This month let's talk about what we actually see on the waters off Edmonds. We live in an area between two mountain ranges and in a maritime climate where we are either under the influence of the North Pacific High or the Gulf of Alaska Low. This results in the fact that we generally either have northerly winds or southerly winds.
Southerlies blow when a Low is offshore of us. The air is moist, it is usually cloudy and the air mass is unstable, meaning that there is a lot of vertical motion happening. The air is partially modified by land, having traveled over southwest Washington. The results are usually quite shifty, puffy winds.
During southerlies the air is most stable, and the wind the steadiest over the middle of the Sound. When air first comes off land it is highly affected by the temperature, friction and terrain from the land. This wind is usually lighter and puffier near shore. Friction

from the land slows an air mass down and deflects it toward the center of the Low. Often times there seems to be a "bluff breeze" along the east side of the Sound, where the strong mid-Sound breezes merge with the land breeze. This can be very beneficial beating upwind as the wind is strong there, it is very southeasterly coming off the land and the water is flat because you are not out in the middle of the Sound.
On southerly days keep an eye on your barometer. When the pressure is dropping we are in a pre-frontal situation which means that the winds will be primarily southeasterly. When the barometer starts rising, we are post-frontal and the wind will clock around to the southwest.
Another observation that is very helpful is looking at the clouds. Look straight to the west. What are the clouds doing over the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas? Weather moves from west to east even though the wind is from the south. If the clouds are moving fast you are going to have a lot of wind for at least a few hours. If the clouds are slow moving and billowing up, the wind will probably die down.
In post-frontal situations with rain clouds coming through, there can be some major shifts. The wind builds initially in a rain squall and shifts to the southwest. Sailing to the west of your competition and tacking in these southwesterly shifts can be very advantageous.
Let's summarize sailing in southerlies. They are very challenging to sail in. The winds are shifty in the short term and geographically. They are also puffy and unpredictable. Many southerly days are overcast and gray which make for difficult optics to see the changes in the wind. Sail on the lifted tack and do not expect it to last long. On windy days sail for the beach to get out of the big waves and into that "bluff breeze". On light air days go for pressure (the most wind). Sail toward and into more wind. If the wind is dieing, usually it will shift to the west. Do not sail too close into shore on light air days. Friction from the land just slows the wind down. If it is a southwesterly, the wind will lift when it senses the land.

Northerly winds occur when the Pacific High pumps up toward us. The conditions are completely different. The air is dry, clear and usually stable. There is more open water to the north which results in air that is less modified by land. Northerlies are predictable. They seem to flow down the Sound the same way time after time. They are primarily affected by land masses that where carved out over the many glaciations. Pay your dues and learn how the northerlies work.
The winds are northerly in Admiralty Inlet, northwesterly in the Point No Point area, extending down to Scatchet Head and rather northeasterly off Kingston and again very northerly south of Richmond beach. Often there is a northeasterly coming out of Possession Sound, but unless it is a windy day, that wind cannot be counted on. There are some major holes in northerlies created by the lee of Whidbey Island and the bubble of hot air over Meadowdale and Edmonds, otherwise known as the "Browns Bay Hole". Sailing up to say Scatchet Head, you need to foot through the light northeasterly to get into the stronger northwesterly out in the middle of the Sound. Coming back from Whidbey the same course in reverse seems to work. Sail out to the good northwesterly first and then jibe when you have a good reaching angle through the light northeasterly that will get you back to Edmonds. Avoid the Browns Bay hole at all costs. Avoid the temptation to sail a straight course to and from Whidbey. It is worth sailing the extra distance in northerlies to stay in the flow.

When sailing south of Edmonds there seems to usually be a steady north-northwesterly out in the Sound with a more northeasterly wind along the east shore. Often times we sail in and out of these winds, making tactics challenging. On windier days the northwesterly usually fills in and makes it, the wind to go for. On lighter days the northeasterly is the breeze to stay in because our race marks are often set in the area of this northeast breeze. When the northeasterly is well set up, such as it often is in our Summer Series races, there is often what we call the "northeasterly wheel". The finish line may be near Point Edwards where the wind is northeasterly. But offshore the wind is even more northeasterly. If you are on starboard tack you get lifted continuously coming up to the finish, never getting much closer to the finish. Do not simply sail in the lift. Rather get your boat sailing toward the inside the wheel, where the finish line is.
To summarize, northerlies are predictable, rather steady and consistent winds. Be observant and learn their patterns. Optics are usually good to see the wind variations. Do not be afraid of sailing extra distance, if it allows you to stay in the good pressure.

December

Safe Sailing

It is the time of the year when we are not sailing a lot. Much time is spent on the busy holiday season. In these little Tip Sheets we have talked about making your boat faster and using good tactics. These tips amount to little if we are not comfortable and safe out on the water. We sail in cold waters, where weather forecasters are notorious for being wrong, and bad weather can spring up quickly. Our sailing year is over, and once we get through the holidays it will be time to think about the coming season. Winter and spring can be times of wild weather and you, your crew and boat should be ready for heavy weather sailing.

The CYCE has been around for nearly 25 years. We are blessed to have an excellent safety record. But we should never let our guard down when it comes to safety. It is hard for me to bring this up, especially at the joyous time of year, but Edmonds sailors do not have a perfect safety record. It was in the early 1970's, during an Edmonds Yacht Club race that tragedy struck. A skipper of a 26' boat fell overboard on a very windy day and the crew was unable to pull him back aboard. He was lost. After that, the EYC mandated that all boats have man-overboard ladders aboard so that a person in the water could more easily get back aboard. Not a bad idea that some of us probably do not adhere to anymore.

Let's talk about owner/skipper responsibility and the crew responsibility when it comes to safety. Skippers are, in the final analysis, responsible for everyone on board.

Try to follow a basic rule. Do not go out sailing when you feel it is unsafe. Why punish your boat, your crew and yourself? Why take chances? If you do get caught out in conditions that seem unsafe, head back in. If that's not a good option, come up with another "run for cover" solution. Skippers need to know their crews abilities and their

tolerance for conditions. Skippers need to have their boats in compliance with safety rules and to have a plan for dealing with emergencies.

At our January Skipper's meeting the Club will have current Pacific International Yachting Association (P.I.Y.A.) safety sheets that all boats need to have on board. All boats must have all the gear specified under Category III. Category III is for inland waters. I will not list all the safety items required here but just say that this list should be a good starting point. Stating the obvious, it is the skipper's responsibility to safely pilot the boat and to have the boat in working condition. The engine should be in perfect working condition. The deck hardware should be safe, the lifelines strong and the rig stout.

How about life jackets? Modern LJ's are comfortable, warm and have excellent visibility. Some people are wearing the new cartridge, harness type. There is no good argument for not wearing an LJ. But in reality, on warm, light air days few sailors wear them. Next time someone asks you about wearing life jackets you better have a good answer.

Cruisers/day sailors have the advantage of having time to wait for good weather. Cruisers should be prudent about long passages across open water. They should be aware that they are most likely short handed and less likely to have other boats in the area. It is always easier to rescue someone if you have a larger crew and there are other boats around to help. Racers think they can sail in any weather and sometimes need to be prudent about racing on blustery days or continuing when conditions deteriorate. No race result or trophy is worth taking a safety risk. Racers have the advantage of usually having a larger crew and having other boats in the area to help in case of an emergency.

It is the crew's responsibility to dress correctly, to know their abilities, and to know their way around the boat. The cockpit is a fairly safe place on a boat. It is ringed by lifelines and stern pulpit and is low in the boat. What is dangerous is the boom. Learn it's height and when and how far to duck. Cockpit crew handling he lines should wear leather gloves. Modern lines are very dense and rope burns are always a possibility. The side decks require hanging on. The foredeck requires extreme sure-footedness and sometimes acrobatic abilities. Crew members should have no reservations about stating their safety concerns, and if they are uncomfortable performing certain duties aboard.

The further forward you are on a boat, the sooner you need to suit up in life jackets and raingear. Smart sailors wear harnesses when they are short handed or when venturing forward in windy conditions. The same case for LJ's can be made for wearing safety harnesses. If you ever sail at night you should wear a strobe light.

Have a great Christmas season everyone. Enjoy the holiday and then start looking forward to the 2005 sailing season. Do it right and be safe. We all want to continue our fine CYCE safety record for many New Years to come.

More to come in 2005 GM