

From Coach Andrew Scrivan:

Congratulations on a job well done racing and drinking last Saturday at the CP Hangover bowl. I was on a coach boat and had some observations that I hope you find useful.

Boat Setup: Before the races started we could all tell that the day was going to be full of large and small puffs ranging great in velocity and direction. For the first few races the breeze was strongest averaging in the mid teens with a small chop. When setting up your sail plan for the first up wind, adjust your controls in this order Cunningham, outhaul, and then vang. Keeping it easy, C-ham first bc as you pull the grommet down the foot of your sail will close, then go ahead and make the necessary outhaul adjustments with the outhaul line. Vang will be the last bc that one control can create and restrict huge loads on the boat upwind and you should be playing it when conditions warrant it.

I would image, that for the first few races everyone was overpowered for most of the beat and easing in the large puffs. In these situations begin to bring on the Cunningham hard. The amount of c-ham will be different for everyone but try to image what breeze strength you begin to ease in up wind, is it 15kts, 19kts, 22kts? What ever it is, that is when your c-ham will be completely maxed out and on as hard as possible. The amount of c-ham applied until you become overpowered should be gradual, try to avoid the vertical wrinkle from the tack up the luff, until the breeze is 25+. Next: outhaul, as a good standard, measure the depth of the outhaul by your finger withs from about the middle of the boom to the deepest part of the foot of the sail. Many of you had the outhaul strapped, like a board with no depth at all. I would never recommend this even if you are light. In flat water and even strong breeze always have at least 4 fingers depth. Even in strong breeze you need power to accelerate out of tacks, accelerate off the start, and work through light spots. You cannot change gears easily and power up the boat for an odd wave or to with a flat out haul. I would have had 5 fingers or so. For the 200+ lbs'ers out there 7 fingers or so would do. If you have any more out you will not be able to point and will spend too much time going sideways. Next: Vang, before the start I would have the vang on loose, so much that as you eased from the block to block position, you would ease out about 2-3 feet before you had positive vang tension. After the start I would adjust the vang conservatively. The vang depowers the rig very well. I would only use vang when you become over powered and you have tightened everything else. Remember with a good amount of vang on you loose pointing ability. And in flat water like Saturday the height loss can be significant. If you wonder about the relationship between vang and pointing ability, tune with a friend of very similar speed in medium breeze where you are hiking but not yet easing. Now one of you wale on your vang, you will see a massive difference in pointing not to mention feel within 30 seconds.

Lets talk about 1st beat approach. All day I felt the ideal scenario was to start boat or middle/boat and to sail off left and wait for the first significant shift to tack on. I was in a nice position in the powerboat to be standing up all the time and looking directly up wind at the puffs coming down. They mostly came out of the middle/right and were often short lived, less than 30 seconds. I do however believe that the sailor with the logo on his sail (sorry for not knowing your name!) won the day for best score on the first beat. He consistently started toward the pin and was one of the last to tack onto port. He usually always played left and made it work (nice job.) No matter how you went upwind though you needed to stand up before the start and "place your bet". Saturday was the perfect scenario to see a massive shift rolling down the course to hit the starting line in a minute or 2. I saw it happen many, many times. If it was to the right, start at the boat, if it was left, go left. It was not hard to see, you just have to train yourself to stand up and get the info. Short course racing is all about analyzing info and making better decisions than others. The first trick is gathering the info, so stand UP!

The reach looked like a lot of fun. I happen to feel very confident reaching. The key is to have a good sense of how strong the puffs are and how weak the lulls are so you know how low to take a puff and how high to head up for the lulls. But above all else plain, plain, plain. If you are not plaining someone is either catching up or pulling away from you. So in order to plain the whole reach leg, get on a course that allows you to plain. Sail trim; C- ham all off unless overpowered then bring it on gradually. Outhaul- out to 9 inches unless it is a tight reach then just leave it in its upwind setting bc remember, when you loosen your c-ham the foot will open an inch or two. Vang is key- loosen the vang so that you have a smooth curvature from the top batten to the lower. If the middle batten is opened well beyond the other two tighten it. If your leach looks like a board with the 3 battens flat, loosen the vang. Board half way up. Do not forget your board! You can plain many degrees lower when the sail is set correctly and the board is ½ way up. Once your boat is set up and you are plaining stop steering. If you jitter the tiller around you will fall off the plain easy. Keep an even amount of leeward heel. You do not want to be flat but heeled to leeward slightly so the hull can pass over waves well, after all you are now going much faster and passing through waves ahead of you. Lastly remember to move back some. The flattest part of the hull is towards the stern and you can plain better on a flat surface, remember skipping stones? Plus, moving back a bit pops the bow out of the water so when you do steer the v of the bow is not dragging across the water. Be careful to not move too far back, too far and you will stop plaining immediately. One great trick, try holding the tiller as low as comfortably possible to increase feel and reduce unnecessary rudder movements.

We had several downwind legs as well. Many of you have seen me sail with my masthead fly and my bow eye windex, well there is a reason. The windexes point to where my breeze is if I see a puff coming down anywhere in the course I want to get either windex pointing at it so I will end up underneath it. Also, the windexes point to clear air, so when I am in traffic I have confidence in my fresh breeze. I consciously look backwards when going downwind for good reason, that's where the wind is coming from. I bet I look backwards downwind, in lighter winds, more than I look forwards. On Saturday there was an interesting trend for the downwind, If one was to sail down the middle for the first 200 yards and then sail to the right of the rumb line (looking downwind) they always made out, and many times huge. Not many people did it but those that did reaped large rewards. The great thing about short course racing is that when something works in one race try to notice it, there is a great chance it will work in the next race so, keep your eyes open for people making gains!

The last beat seemed a bit more straightforward. The shifts were less abrupt and the leg was shorter. When ahead don't take chances, stay with your respective pack and heard them. When behind in the pack make sure you are in a clear lane and do not be afraid to tack on all the decent size shifts.

Well hope that helps. Please feel free to email me any questions for clarifications I am happy to help. See you next spring! rent@estateventures.com