

LOFT LINES

A NEWSLETTER FROM HAARSTICK SAILMAKERS

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DURABILITY OF SAILCLOTH

By: Steve Haarstick

How long will my new sail last? I probably hear this question more often than any other, yet it's one that is very hard to answer. Now that the start of the sailing season is finally at hand, it is a good time to look at the variables that affect the life of your new sail.

The most important variable in the useable life of your sail is your tolerance for changes in the sail's shape with use. The stretch properties of all sailcloth will change with use. The more severe the use, the poorer quality of the cloth, the greater the change, and the faster it occurs. Different types of cloth will show different shape changes. But more important than all of these factors is your individual tolerance for the shape changes that are unavoidable.

For example, if you are a world class sailor preparing for the Olympics, any shape change from "brand new" is unacceptable, and new sails are often discarded after one regatta. Durability is obviously not a concern at this extreme level. On the opposite end the spectrum, you may consider that your sail is still "good" as long as it remains in one piece. In this case, shape change and loss of speed potential is not as important. These two sails could have the same cloth, and be used in the same conditions, but the second example will be considered useable for a much longer time.

Your sail's lifespan also depends on how you use it: Most important is the average and maximum velocity of the wind in which the sail is used. The damage that heavy air inflicts on a sail derives from two sources: The first, and most damaging, is flogging in heavy air. The energy that is available to destroy your sail is proportional to the square of the apparent wind. That means that in 25 knots there is four times the destructive force than in 12.5 knots apparent.

To minimize damage to your new sail, there are just a few rules that you should follow: Do not practice reefing or tacking in heavy air with your new sails, use your old sails. Avoid flogging your sails whenever possible by minimizing unnecessary tacks or gybes before the start of a heavy air race. Never hang your sail from the rigging to dry in a breeze. Don't walk or sleep on your new sails. Don't stuff them in the bag. Instead, roll or flake them. Don't bake them in the trunk of your car. Take the time to tape over sharp edges everywhere: spreader tips, mast and boom fittings, cotter pins, lifelines, spinnaker pole, anything that can snag or tear your sails. Make sure your new genoa has the spreader patches in the correct location: 99% of tears can be avoided with a careful eye. There is no cloth that is immune to tearing. Not Kevlar, Carbon, Pentex, Spectra, Dacron, and especially Nylon. There is no quicker way to demo a new sail than a major tear!

The second source of sail destruction in heavy air is the greater chance of overloading the cloth beyond its elastic limit, particularly in the high load areas of the sail. This becomes more likely as the sailcloth ages. All cloth loses strength with use. Some types of fabrics lose strength much faster than others. A durable sail must retain enough strength after extended use to avoid overloading and the permanent damage this causes. Laminate sails are especially vulnerable to delamination at the inside edges of the corner reinforcements. This can be an acute problem with the “string” constructions popular with other lofts.

Before you consider purchasing the lightest possible sail, keep this thought in mind. Sails that are built as light as possible, also have the smallest safety margin. When the sail material loses strength with use, the possibility of overloading becomes more likely. If this loss were just a little, safety margins could also be small. However, many fabrics lose a high percentage of their original strength with use. It is critical to know how much loss occurs if there is any chance of predicting the structural life of your sail. Without testing the cloth, in particular, without our Impact Flutter testing, you can't know how much loss to expect. Without taking these losses into account, it is very easy to pick a fabric, or construction that will not have the necessary residual strength to carry the stresses without excessive, permanent distortion. It is not unusual to see high tech laminates, especially Kevlar lose over 50% of their original threadline strength over a reasonably short period of time. Add in the additional loss due to U.V. exposure (turns color from gold to brown), and you can see another 50% loss. Using this fiber without allowing for these losses can lead to a very short life.

Other fabrics may not be as strong initially, but lose much less strength with use. Trading off a little more stretch when new, for less change of shape with use is also a valid choice when durability is concerned. We have substituted Pentex laminates for many Kevlar sails in boats 40 feet and under with excellent durability. We have also had excellent results with the Carbon materials that we have used for the past three seasons. These Carbon laminates are not the brittle, super high modulus Carbon used in the American's Cup sails. They are much more tolerant of fatigue and flexing, and they have no U.V. loss. Carbon fabric when tested in its unused condition may have slightly more stretch than a Kevlar fabric with a similar construction and weight, but it loses far less of its original strength with use.

We have tested sailcloth for the past 30+ years in our effort to use the best, most durable fabrics available for your sail. We believe our testing is critical to predicting the long term performance and durability of your sails, but ultimately their long term durability depends to a large extent on how you use and care for your new sail.

Recent Regatta Results

Alberg 30 Dominates the Class at Annapolis NOOD's - The Currier's Alberg 30 "Infinity" with all new Haarstick sails took first place with a 1,3,1,1,1,2 out of seven boats. Read the [WRITE UP](#) to see how they did it. Nice Job Infinity crew.

J-Daze 2005 (J/24's District 7 season opener) - Kirk Reynolds drives "Frolic" to a 2nd place. In light air on Saturday and 20+ on Sunday, his Haarstick Inventory was fast in all conditions bringing them consistent finishes of 6-8-4-2. The boat to beat him was Mark Swanson using Z Sails. Way to go Mark. (Mark uses our sails on his Ensign in Long Island Sound and Finished 2nd in the 2002 National's out of 43 boats.)

J-Daze - [Results](#) [Picture of light air race on Saturday](#). (yes this was a race??)

THE SEASON IS UPON US

Sailing season has begun for us northerners. Is your sail inventory complete?

For our Upstate racing customers, there are many regatta's coming up already. If you have any gaps to fill give us a call and I'll get a quote together for you.

JUNE 3,4 - Rochester , Spring Regatta

JUNE 4 - Buffalo , Icebreaker Regatta

JUNE 4 - Oswego Hospice Regatta

JUNE 11,12 - Sodus, Challenge Cup Regatta

JUNE 11,12 - Oswego , District 7 J/24 Pennant Series Regatta

JUNE 17 - Rochester , Scotch Bonnet Light Race

JUNE 24-26 - Toronto NOOD

Production delivery dates are on or nearing these dates. If you have been thinking you might need to replace a sail or get it repaired, bring it in and we'll take a look at it on our inspection rig with you. OR call us and we'll set up a time to take a look at them on the water. I look forward to hearing from you.

Doug Burtner

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TESTIMONIALS

Right to the point, here a few recent words from customers:

Hi Guy's,

As chairman of the Brockport Yacht Club-Race Organizing Committee, I wanted to thank you for the race seminars you held during the off season. Many of our racing members attended. We all felt that we learned quite a bit. I've attached a copy of our May BYC Racing Newsletter so that you might see the piece on the seminars. Thanks again.

**Regards
Bob Spencer
BYC-ROC**

An anonymous post on Sailing Anarchy (www.sailinganarchy.com) on 1/12/05

The post was made by the username "Irishember", when there was a discussion about sailmakers.

HAARSTICK SAILS - Rochester, NY

Steve and his crew at the loft take pride on making sure that your sails are fast for your boat, your boat is set up right to get the most out of the sails, seminars, quick- often same day repairs, coaching for customers and ideas on how to win more.

I've tried the rest (many other sailmakers listed), I can not match the service, support and fast sails that they are cutting. You can bash him (Steve) all you want (e.g. critical material testing), but in the end, the Haarstick sails are well constructed, out of the best lot of fabric possible and I can go to them with a problem and they will take care of it. Thanks Steve (and John, Doug, Tony, Gunnar and the rest of the loft crew) for insuring that what I buy will be the best possible and for the support after.

I have never had a Haarstick sail delaminate, never sent one back because it didnt fit, or blew out earlier than I thought it would or I didnt like the way it set, honestly

(and no, it was not one of us)

Another post on a website. This came from the Nonsuch 26 customer who purchased the sail that is featured on the ["Production Process"](#) page on our website.

You can actually see this sail going through our custom process, step by step. After one season of use this is what he had to tell other Nonsuch sailors on a Nonsuch Forum.

It has been a full season (about 400 hours) with the sail I purchased from Haarstick Sails. This summer has been a windy one on Lake Erie and after sailing in everything from 30 knots to zero knots the sail has seen a busy season. I'm guessing 1/3 of the time we were reefed in some manner. Big improvement in preformance particularly in light winds and very heavy wind. The 2nd reef is much more effective now and in very light air the full battens do make a difference. I did notice the nylon telltails do not exit as easily on port vs starboard and I think it is the manner they are attached that is the issue.

I removed the sail from the boat last weekend and after a careful going over it looks like it just came new out of the box.

So after year one I am very pleased with the sail and the workmanship.

THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF HAARSTICK SAILMAKERS!!

By Don Finkle – President of [RCR Yachts](#)

Having done a lot of business with Steve Haarstick over the years we were pleased to see that he celebrated the 35th anniversary of his loft on March 1. Steve has outlasted many of the once-mighty names in his industry who are long gone, now only distant memories of days gone by. If I recall correctly he started working for one of those long-since-departed lofts, Hard Sails. The most popular sailing T-shirts back then were ones given out by Hard Sails, with the slogan "Sail with a Hard on" (don't blame me, I'm only reporting history here). Steve, as any of you who know him are well aware, is cut from his own bolt of cloth, no "yes man", that is for sure. But his commitment to quality and scientific sailmaking has been consistent throughout the history of his company. He won't design, build or sell anything that does not meet his standards. He may not be the biggest or flashiest outfit, but he will be around as long as he wants to be. There is always room for someone who takes his business that seriously.

We suggest that you visit the Haarstick Sailmakers website and read the latest Loftlines newsletter, www.haarsticksailmakers.com (March Newsletter). Steve's article is hilarious and true to his personality. We are trying to find out how he did in the Bacardi Cup in his Star, but cannot yet find the results. We know he did not win, but then this is one of the deepest fleets you will find anywhere and if he stayed out of the cheapest seats I'm sure he'll be satisfied.

KIRBY YACHT SALES

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A NEW SAILBOAT BROKERAGE WITH A 25 YEAR HISTORY:

"I am excited to announce the formation of Kirby Yacht Sales, a new Sailboat Brokerage serving western New York ! As you may or may not be aware, I have been working as a broker in this area for the past 25 years and I have provided this region with professional sales and service and have always been a top producer.

As the owner of a small company with only one product to offer... service, I am determined to deliver the finest professional, personalized service that anyone could hope to receive. I am committed to providing superior personal attention and have a unique ability to match your sailing needs and preferences to the right boat at the right price for you and your family.

"Kirby Yacht Sales" will list the best boats regardless of size or price and will work toward the best match of boat with the sailor. My extensive experience over the years and my contacts throughout the industry allows me to offer you additional services, which I can assist in coordinating as needed. .

Should you be in the sailboat market or know of someone who is, I would appreciate the opportunity to talk about what I can bring to the table."

-Mark Kirby

Mark has been a strong supporter of Haarstick Sailmakers and we wish him well with this new venture.

Newspaper article about Haarstick Sailmakers

It has been one year since a local newspaper wrote an article about Haarstick Sailmakers. The focus was on local businesses. Many thanks to the Democrat and Chronicle.

“Custom sail design keep local maker on fast tack”

By Richard Mullins
Staff Writer, Democrat and Chronicle

(May 31, 2004) — In a workshop tucked in an unassuming storefront on Hudson Avenue , Stephen Haarstick stands watch as his employees pull triangles of fabric across the wide wooden floor and through huge sewing machines.

[READ ON \(click here\)](#)

LOCAL UPSTATE NY NEWSLETTERS

If you are not already receiving their e-mail newsletters, we recommend that you sign up for these two upstate NY newsletters:

For the **RCR** Newsletters: <http://www.rcryachts.com/newsform.htm>

For the **Navy Point** Newsletter: <http://www.navypointmarine.com/subscribe.html>
