

LOFT LINES

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A NEWSLETTER FROM HAARSTICK SAILMAKERS

1461 Hudson Ave. Rochester, NY 14621

(800) 342-5033 (585) 342-5200

email: info@haarsticksailmakers.com

Web site: www.haarsticksailmakers.com

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2008 Seminars at Haarstick

This Saturday the 8th, 10am – 12pm (Tomorrow)

There is a winter storm warning but from what we are seeing there will not be more than a few inches tomorrow morning. It starts to get bad tomorrow afternoon so we hope the 40+ that have been coming will brush off their cars and make it in tomorrow. Coffee and Donuts will be waiting for you.

Please “reply” (or click here: sales@haarsticksailmakers.com) quickly and let us know if you plan to attend. This way we can make sure we have seats, and more importantly donuts, for everyone.

Date: February 9th

Time: 10-12

Location: 1461 Hudson Ave. (2nd building North of Rt104 on West Side of Hudson)

What: Downwind Tactics and Boat Handling, Mark Roundings

Who: Jon Faudree

What Else: Donuts, Coffee, Juice, Friends, Tours

Following Seminar Dates: (April 12th : Rules)

Team Building

As I put fingers to keyboard to write about sailing I am looking outside and can't help but feel that the weather is about as far from ideal sailing conditions as it could get. However it is March and before you know it the spring rush will be in full swing and we will be hastily preparing our boats for launch day.

Now is the time to start making up lists of what needs to be worked on before the boat hits the slings. Is this the year to fair the keel or do that epoxy bottom job that you have been putting off? Are the halyards worn and in need of replacing or should you upgrade your electronics from the old analog type to the digital, wireless age? These are all common maintenance issues that every racing skipper must deal with each spring and figure out what is in the budget and what is not, but the most important improvement that can be made to your boats performance is often the cheapest when compared to a new carbon headsail or slip fees is the human component or more commonly known as crew.

Proper training and team building seems to be one of the most often overlooked aspects of boat prep by most club sailors. Now is the perfect time to get together with your crew at the club, have a few cold ones and get geared up for the new season and look back at last season. Why was it successful or why was it not? What should this years goals be? What areas of improvement should we concentrate on? Who's available for what and what regatta's does everyone want to do? The list goes on and on.

Good communication can go a long way towards focusing your crew on their strengths and weakness and will give each crewmember a better grasp on his or hers job. It will also help strengthen your team by bringing them together and help to eliminate finger pointing and the blame game when something goes wrong out on the racecourse.

I have sailed on too many boats where everybody only does one job and though they do it well, do not fully understand the processes that the other crew positions require and how each position can directly affect everyone else. This puts a team at a real disadvantage when someone is absent or during a high stress situation such as a chaotic mark rounding or close crossing situation. Cross training each crewmember will give each crewmember a chance to get to know the different positions on the boat, breaks up some of the monotony of being just a trimmer, grinder or bowman and gives the whole team a better appreciation for everybody's role on the boat. Plus it's a big help when someone needs help or when missing a crewmember as mentioned above.

It has always been my impression that the crewmember who gives up every Wednesday night and one or two weekends a month for a regatta is dedicated. They are out to do it for the love of sailing, the competition of racing and generally have a healthy competitive spirit. They certainly are not doing it for pay, unless you count the beer and rum as compensation and will respond positively to constructive criticism and the personal rewards that come along with self-improvement. Getting your crew involved, on the water practice, and team meetings or briefings before and after the race, will encourage your crew to take a more proactive role in their positions and as a result boat handling will improve, mark rounding will be cleaner, jibes smoother and tacks faster. We all know what this means, race results will improve and nothing boosts morale and participation better than a top spot finish.

This now takes us into practice, which I will be writing about in part two in next month's April edition of Loft Lines. Until then get together with your crew and start thinking about how you can ramp up your program for 2008.

This is a subject that has been beaten to death, but is so often ignored. Having organized the crew for my dad's boat for many years it can be really tough to coordinate the schedules of ten people and try to get them to all show up on a non-race night, but the benefits are huge. Particularly in the beginning of the season when everyone is rusty from the winter and trying to ease themselves back into the sport. We would try to get out a minimum of 2 times in the evening before the first weeknight race and then for a full day out on the water to go through all the drills, rig tuning, sail combinations and whatever else that we felt we needed to work on after we had a few races under our belt.

MARCH 1968- FORTY YEARS IN UPSTATE NEW YORK!

On a bleak, cold day in early March, 1968, (much like today's weather) I arrived in Ithaca, NY. For the four years prior, I had been finishing up my Master's degree, doing my active duty in the Army Reserves, and working at Hard Sails in Islip, NY as their "big" boat designer. That January, I met Don McPherson at the New York Boat Show, and decided to move to Ithaca to run his fledgling "Hard-McPherson" sail loft.

When I got to Ithaca, my first thought was to check out the lake. The main draw beyond the challenge of running a loft ON MY OWN was the lure of a 20+ strong Star fleet at the Ithaca Yacht Club. Then I saw

Cayuga Lake. Compared to Long Island Sound, it looked like a pond, surrounded by mountainous hills on both sides. How could 20+ Stars race on such a small piece of water? How shifty would the winds be with hills like that? Any doubts I had about the size of the lake were enhanced when I viewed the loft. With a space of only 52 feet by 38 feet, broken up by posts down the center every 12 feet, I wondered if I could even lay out a Star main!

Never-the-less, the next morning I showed up bright and early for my first day, ready and eager to get to work designing and building the many sail orders that were sure to be piling up for spring delivery. Not to mention meeting the existing employees. However, there was only one employee, Norm French, whose first words to me were: "So, you're the new hotshot sail designer." And followed by: "We'll get along just fine if you remember one simple rule: Don't tell me what to do!"

That's when I noticed he was assembling the only sail order in the shop, a Penguin main, but he wasn't doing it correctly. Ignoring his advice, my first words were: "Pleased to meet you Norm. You're not putting that sail together right." That was start of a "beautiful" relationship.

As I look back, I am still amazed that the business survived those first few years. We literally started from nothing with a few Comet orders, and were always on the verge of being out of work, no matter what time of year. We had only two sewing machines, neither of which worked very well, and a tiny space. Yet for the next two years, we got enough orders to stay alive, and, for the most part, our sails were doing very well.

When I purchased the business from Don in March 1970, we had won some national championships in the Comet and Flying Scot classes, and my Star results were generating a sizable amount of business on the east coast. While we weren't in "fat city", at least we were growing, and the future looked bright.

I often look back on the perils, pitfalls, yet pure adrenaline rushes that occurred in the early years of building this business as some of the most satisfying moments of my sailmaking career.

J/24 Midwinter's 2008 - Kris Werner Reports

Steve/Doug-

I just wanted to reiterate my feeling on the sails from Midwinter's.

First, I am sorry we did not do better with our results, however it was operator error not the sails or boatspeed. The genoa really looks sharp, and I cannot think of much, if anything I would do to make it look better.

The main, looks great, although I would definitely consider adding a touch more roach up top. The outhaul and slug still seem just a touch too high on the mast, i.e. when you pull on the outhaul the lens foot (sailmaker speak?) and its wrinkles seem to look a little goofy and too high on the sail/mast. Perhaps just lowering the slug and starting the lens foot material just a little lower would look much better.

Jib, looks much better with flatter design.

Spin, looks great as always. I think the other designers have caught up a bit as we don't see quite the speed advantage as we used to downhill, but still very good.

For almost the entire regatta I found us to have exceptional speed/point upwind with the genoa, and on top of that we were sailing 30-40lbs light in mostly heavy breeze. I think we have made some great improvements and are 1 or 2 tweaks away from having the fastest all around j-24 sails. All I have to do is prove it at a major event or two!!!!!!!!!!

Kris

J/22 Sails in Jamaica - Haarstick Still Going Strong

Doug

2 things – first of all you should know that a Jamaican team with Haarstick jib and main went to Cayman for their KPMG regatta last weekend. We ended up coming 5th out of 9 in a very competitive small fleet. Terry Flynn of Quantum Sails Texas ended up winning the event but we were very glad to beat him in two races. The Cayman teams are awesome.

<http://www.caymannelnews.com/news-5184--1-1--.html>

Conditions were variable and very unusual for Cayman – 5 to 15 knots out of the south east (the direction being unusual). Coming off the land made it very bumpy. It took us two days to figure out what to look for on the water.

What tickled me was that we campaigned my 18 month old main and my three (or four?) year old jib. We had great speed and height on the water and the races were won or lost in the hunt for pressure and puffs.

Regards

Richard

