

39 Lessons Learned from Dave Perry's Clinic

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A racing clinic run by Etchells Fleet 27 and J/24 Fleet 43 on July 29-31, 2019 @ Portland Yacht Club, Falmouth, Maine

General

1. It's the rules that make sailing a game. It's the people that make the game fun.
2. Anticipate and develop tactics for situations 30 seconds in the future.

Pre-Start

3. Don't sail way up the leg before hand; instead sail upwind on a couple tacks for only 4 to 5 minutes, turn around set kite, gybe a couple times; then repeat.
4. Practice leeward mark rounding until crew can touch the mark during the exit.
5. Tune and trim to achieve a well-balanced helm!! Too much weather helm is just a brake.
6. Sight starting pin against a shore reference through R/C transom (not through orange flag staff) to allow for helmsman being aft of the bow and provide an additional buffer distance to line.
7. Check favored end of starting line ~3-5 minutes before starting signal.
8. Factor in current when setting up for the start to achieve your planned starting position.
9. Stay close to your windward competitor on the starting line; build a space to leeward; don't give up the leeward space too early.

Start

10. No later than 1m 30s before the starting signal, you should be on starboard tack and proceeding on your approach course to the starting line.
11. In light wind, if tacking on a header, don't tack away from stronger breeze
12. If late at the start, tack to port as early as possible to use the remaining pre-start time to get into a better lane and to get closer to the line.

Beat

13. After the start, if in a poor lane, tack out – the sooner, the better.
14. Helmsmen - trust your mainsheet trimmer/tactician:
 - a. Look **only** at the jib telltales and the patch of water around the bow.
 - b. Ask tactician or other crew to provide verbal input on speed/point and competitor activity, if necessary – don't look yourself.
 - c. Don't overload yourself - have another crewmember handle at least 2 of these: mainsheet, traveller, backstay.
 - d. Avoid over steering.
15. Mainsheet trimmer/tactician – you are the eyes and brains upwind; it is your job to tell the helmsman where to go, speed/point relative to other boats, etc.

16. Bow (& other crew):

- a. Watch for other ROW boats.
- b. Watch for and call out wind shifts and puffs.
- c. Monitor and adjust sail controls and sail trim.
 - i. Don't stall jib's upper leech telltale (ever).
- d. Monitor speed/point versus competitors and report.
- e. Look for and keep track of next mark.

17. Employ the hail "Tack or Cross" as appropriate when on port and approaching a starboard tack boat to better anticipate and control the situation.

18. Don't end the tack with the jib luffing or eased out too far. Slow the boat rotation down (after passing head to wind) to allow the jib trimmer to get the jib fully trimmed in before reaching the new close-hauled course.

19. Flat water, flat jib:

- a. move jib leads back; can stand a tighter halyard and backstay to point higher.
- b. Vice-versa in lumpy water: rounder jib; leads forward, less halyard tension and ease backstay to increase jib luff sag and jib draft depth.

20. When underpowered upwind:

- a. Move crew inboard and/or to leeward to increase heel.
- b. Rake mast more (loosen headstay before start IAW class rules).
- c. Close upper mainsail leach more, but don't stall upper leech telltale more than ~50% of time.
- d. Move jib lead forward or slide jib up headstay.
- e. Ease jib halyard/jib Cunningham.
- f. Ease backstay.
- g. Ensure lower mainsail leach is on centerline (Traveller above CL).

21. When overpowered upwind:

- a. Hike harder; get everyone on the rail.
- b. Trim to balance out helm.
- c. Add backstay tension.
- d. Tension mainsail outhaul.
- e. Twist mainsail, raise traveller to avoid losing point.
- f. Increase jib halyard tension.
- g. Move jib leads aft (or slide jib down headstay).
- h. Tighten lowers (or uppers and lowers); shorten headstay to reduce mast rake.

Symbol Key:

= Super Important Point

= Item not mentioned specifically during clinic, but added by Matt

Rounding Top Mark

22. If approaching on port within the zone, **don't** tack short. Take transoms as needed to get to an area where you don't foul established starboard tackers.
23. Set the pole in time – well before getting to the rounding mark.
24. Cheat the spinnaker tack and halyard while approaching the offset (or windward) mark.
25. Don't worry about easing jib (esp. genoa) during the rounding... if eased, the jib (genoa) slows down the spinnaker hoist and set.
26. Prevent spinnaker wraps by
 - a. setting only after pole is set
 - b. Hoisting jib
 - c. When windy, trim in both spin sheet and guy, particularly during the gybe when the pole comes off
27. “Pop” the kite on the set by snapping the pole aft off the headstay to its correct position just before the halyard gets to full hoist (when shy ~3 feet of full hoist).
28. Keep jib up in heavy wind if conditions are over your head. (Keeps kite from wrapping around headstay; also helps recover from round-up.)

Run

29. Maintain a clear wind lane using the masthead fly – if arrow points to a boat, you are in its wind shadow (❖ extends up to 7 mast-lengths or 100 yds for an Etchells).
30. Spinnaker Trim:
 - a. Keep pole (horizontal) 90 deg to mast. Keep spinnaker tack/pole height lower than (leeward) clew (or at same height, maybe).
 - b. Spread foot of spinnaker out as wide as possible; over-square the pole (some), if possible
 - c. Don't ease (leeward) spinnaker clew out past headstay.
31. In wind strengths stronger than your comfort zone:
 - a. Choke down the kite to stabilize the boat in heavy wind (pull in twings; pull outboard end of pole lower – also lower on mast to keep pole horizontal).
 - b. Head up as necessary to broad reach to stabilize the boat in heavy wind.
 - c. ❖ Avoid natural urge to fight the helm when boat rolls while sailing DDW in strong wind; instead, apply small, but smooth steering inputs in sync with the boat rolling:
 - i. ❖ Head **down** (even if it means going a few degrees by-the-lee) when rolling to windward.
 - ii. ❖ Head **up** when rolling to leeward.

Approaching Leeward Mark

32. Boat should be 100% ready for going upwind at 2 lengths before arriving at the leeward mark.
 - a. Set traveller, backstay, outhaul, Cunningham, vang, mast ram, barber haul, etc. for next beat prior to the boat getting to 2 boat lengths before leeward mark.
 - b. Remove the spinnaker pole early... fly kite without the pole for a few seconds.
 - c. Stow the pole on the side of the boat it is last used on... don't fiddle around stowing the pole to leeward. Later, on the beat, move the pole to its correct stow position, **but only if** needed again in the race.
 - d. Raise the jib and lower kite earlier than you think.
 - i. Get the jib halyard up taut enough – even over hoisted (it will be easier to ease it than to tighten it on the beat).
33. Twing-twing-sheet-sheet. Retrieve slack spinnaker sheets and twings from the water.

Rounding Leeward Mark

34. Round leeward mark following in line behind the transom of the boat ahead (not outside). Leave 4-6 ft of clearance to transom of the boat ahead.
 - a. Determine and accept your rounding position several boat lengths before the leeward mark.
 - b. Unlock your bow to gain sufficient clearance (4-6 ft) to not run into the boat ahead.
35. Take 1 boat length diameter circle around mark - start wide then end up tight. Crew should be able to touch mark when passing the mark to start the beat.
36. Over-trim the mainsail during the rounding to help turn the boat. Under-trim the jib for same reason.
37. Consider a Dave Curtis leeward mark approach – very wide approach, then reach in fast, round and sail inside jib for a boat length to gain a few feet of buffer to windward and avoid the boat just ahead when starting the beat. (Will need that 6 ft gap for this).
38. If lots of boats round mark ahead of you, consider a “sling shot” tack around leeward mark to quickly get to clear air.
39. If the boat ahead tacks, consider that a gift. Let her go, even if she fouls you a little (once she passes head-to-wind, she is tacking – she loses her mark room rights at that point).

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