

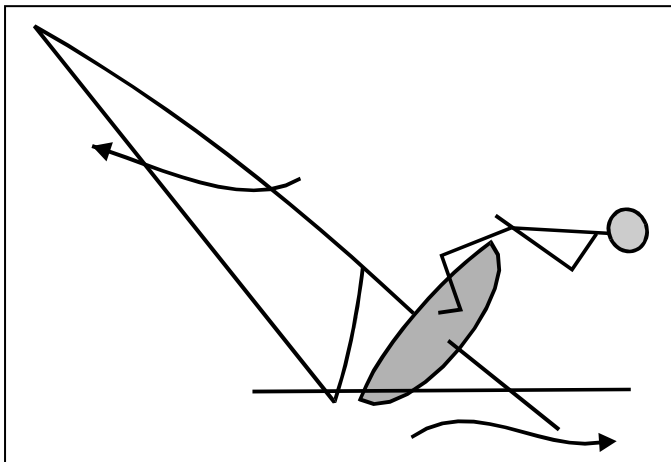
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## STRONG WIND SAILING

I'm really conscious, as a coach who watches a lot of Topper sailing, that the boat has a lot of sail area and as we attract younger and younger sailors they find strong winds a challenge. Clearly a 35kg sailor in a 20 knot breeze is never going to be as competitive as a 60kg sailor of similar talent but here are a few tips that will narrow the gap and more importantly make the experience much more fun!

### THE WAY NOT TO DO IT FIRST!



This sailor is fighting the wind. Sure enough on a beat he or she is not capsizing but the extra power is only being lost because it is healing over. Unfortunately the boat is skidding sideways, the windage under the hull is driving it over, the boat is trying to round up into the wind because of the hull curvature and the weight of the mast is tipping it even more. Worse still he or she is breaking their back! Sounds like all bad news to me. **So what is the answer?**

### THE ANSWERS

#### BE PREPARED TO REEF

It's ok to reef. Certainly I have no problem with seeing smaller sailors making that decision. I recently heard it said that if you have to ask the question "should I reef?" then you probably should! Remember that it is easier to remove a reef on the water than to put one in.

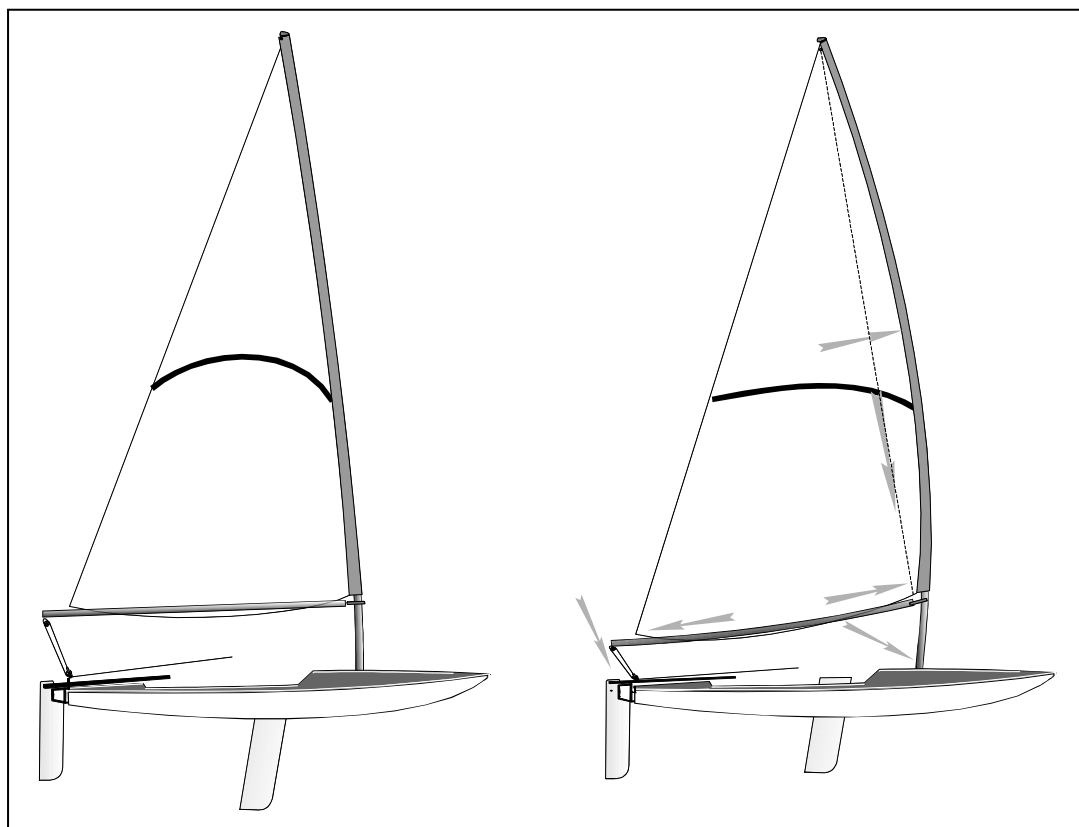
### Tips for reefing

- Unclip the kicker from the mast and leave it attached to the boom.
- Put the downhaul on very tight.
- Always roll the sail twice around the mast. One roll will always fall out.

Reefing will decrease sail area but the sail ends up being rather baggy and therefore more powerful than you might expect.

### FLATTEN THE SAIL

Easy really, a deep sail will give you power whereas a flat sail will give you less power. Lighter sailors will have to use all there own power to pull the controls on hard enough. Try to use the best controls you can afford, get the rope lengths just right and use your leg muscles to pull them on.



**THE PRINCIPLE** - use the kicker, mainsheet and downhaul to bend the mast. A bent mast will pull the sail material forward which has the effect of flattening the camber in the sail. The wind is therefore more able to slide off the sail thus decreasing the power.

**The mainsheet** - pulls down the back of the sail which bends the mast by pulling on the tip. Once the mainsheet is let out it also decreases power by allowing wind to escape out of the side of the sail.

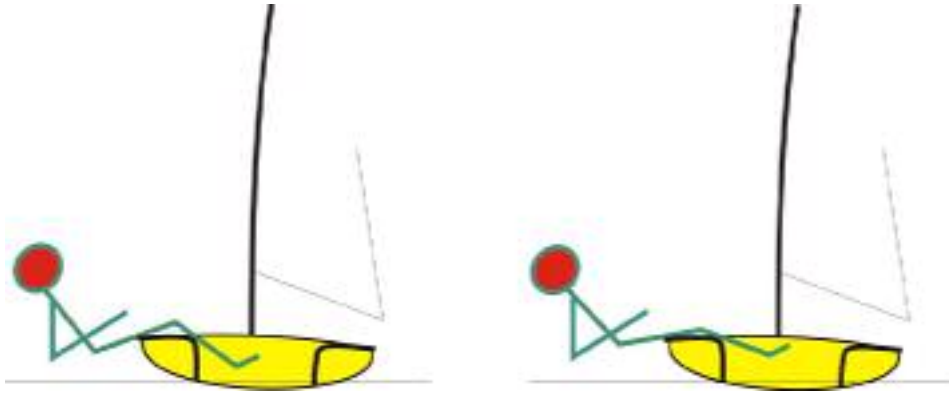
**The kicker** - does the same as the mainsheet. In addition it drives the boom into the mast which also bends it. It also keeps the mast bent when the mainsheet has to be let out in gusts.

**The downhaul** - acts like a bow-string. It pulls the top of the mast down without pulling on the back of the sail. This makes it especially effective because the wind can more easily escape when the back of the sail is not pulled tight. Importantly, as well, it pulls the fullness in the sail further towards the mast which counteracts the wind's effect of taking the fullness further back.

**The outhaul** - makes the bottom of the sail more or less full. It will also need to be pulled tighter than you might think because the sail cloth is stretched by the wind and the sail ends up deeper than you need.

## OTHER TIPS

- Lift the **daggerboard** about 150mm when beating upwind; it will take the harshness out of the boat. Conversely leaving a little more down when on a run will steady the boat down. Remember to tighten the daggerboard elastic to save the board dropping out of the slot if you do turtle. **(This is important)**.
- In flat water you can decrease the power on the beat by pinching higher than you would normally. You can feel the boat heel towards you as you overdo it. Weave a tight course that just keeps the boat flat when you are hiking hard.
- Hold your mainsheet high up under your chin so you can let the sail out by letting your arm straighten rather than letting the rope slip through your hand. This technique needs strong arms but it really works well. You can hike as hard as possible and when the wind overpowers you, drop your hand, when the wind dies a bit take your hand back to your chin - perfect!
- Hike with straight legs. This will lift your bum out of the water and take your shoulders out as well - great for leverage. It hurts I'm afraid but it hurts everyone but it is fast. The fitter you are the faster you sail is a great chant! When you feel like giving up just count to 25 and others around you will slip back as they give up - you win - YESSSS!



- Give yourself more **time and space** to make manoeuvres. KISS (keep it simple sunshine) is a great tip at all times but especially in strong winds.
- Keep **looking** towards the direction the wind is coming from so that you are ready to react when it arrives rather than a split second later when it is already too late.
- On a **reach** be prepared to bear away with the gusts (stronger wind) and try to come up in the lulls (lesser wind)
- On a **run** sit well back and if you are still nose-diving put more kicker on. Pulling the sail in more will steady the boat down but will make it slower (not as slow as upside-down of course!).
- Wear hiking shorts but take care making sure they fit correctly.

## TACKING

Toppers, like a lot of single-handed boats do not like tacking in very strong wind. A few tips:

- \* **Be BOLD.** Go into the tack with plenty of speed (you may want to crack off a little as you approach the tack)
- \* Push the tiller over more than usual - the boat has to be forced through the wind - and go well beyond close hauled on the other tack.
- \* If there are **waves** aim to be starting the tack as you go up the face of the wave; you will then be tacking at the top of the wave when both ends of the boat are out the water and speeding down the wave when you need to go faster.
- \* If you do get stuck '**in irons**' raise the daggerboard, sit further back, reverse across the wind, ease the kicker and let the sail out. As you start to move forward push the tiller across slowly and whip it back really hard. Repeat the later several times. Tease the sail in because if you pull it in too quickly it will push you back into the wind again and finally use your weight to pull the boat on top of you.

***Above all enjoy yourself and if you are young and/or inexperienced be prepared to come in if it's too much. The last thing we want is to see you put off Topper sailing!***

I have a sheet of suggested sail settings for different conditions. If you would like a copy email me on [dave@sailing-solutions.co.uk](mailto:dave@sailing-solutions.co.uk) and I will send one by return.