

Hill Head Sailing Club Mirror Training Four – May 5th 2007

Welcome to the fourth Mirror Dinghy training session held at Hill Head Sailing Club. This training session was held on the eve of the 2007 Mirror Open hosted by Hill Head. The course was run by Peter Aitken the UK National Mirror Team Coach.

We started off looking at different boat set ups as well as identifying ways of making our dinghies more effective..

A question was raised about the move to the new single mast. Peter believes that it is a positive development . It makes the boat faster and much easier to rig. A new mast costs around £260 – which is similar to the cost of a replacement gaff. More importantly Peter believes that we should change to a metal boom as a first priority.

There is also a move to convert to centre mainsheet. Doesn't this mean that there is no space left for the crew to move across the boat ... I hear you ask. Well, it's OK if you have installed a **GNAV**. And what I hear you ask is a **GNAV**. Well, obviously it's an inverted VANG...or kicking strap to use words most of us understand but **parts gnikcik** didn't sound as good. The **GNAV** is a strut which slides on the top of the boom and can be adjusted to move the boom up or down. A simpler possibility could be to move the bottom securing point for the kicker up the boat to the bottom of the mast and back on the boom. – but check class rules for any restrictions.



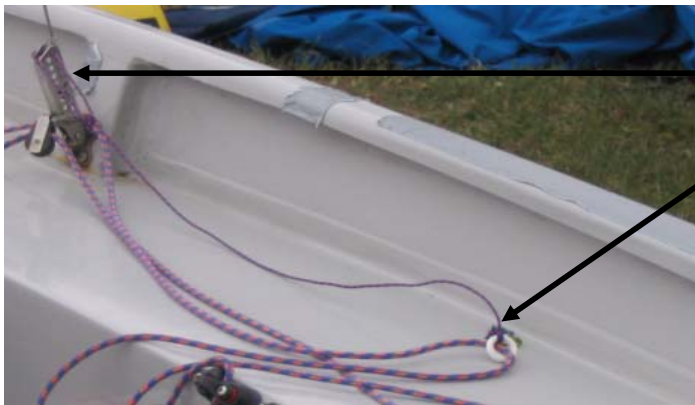
This is the gnu gnav which rests on the boom

If the new rig gives the boat an advantage over the conventional rig shouldn't there be a change in the handicap ???

When adding complicated improvements to your boat, or when you buy a boat with them it pays to make copious sketches and take photographs before you take them off for maintenance.... I'm still not sure that I have got my spinnaker controls re-connected properly !!!!!

Peter likes the use of thin jib sheets, but not at the expense of the crew's hands !!! When setting the jib ensure that you take out the creases at the luff hanks. Some boats have a luff adjustment back to the cockpit.. In general the bottom of the jib should be about level with the gunwale. The jib sheets could be joined together- Sometimes helpful when single handed. This can be done at the clew of the sail to avoid knots in the boat.

It is useful to have a short length of rope from the shroud to the spinnaker sheet on either side to prevent the halyard looping back round the end of the boom. Some boats have a simple fixed length , mine has a more complicated adjustable one.



Line from shroud to spinnaker line

Another neat development is the use of an elastic cord with a washer running on the spinnaker return line which keeps the end of the spinnaker in the sock. The spinnaker sock shown here has a very wide entry which is better than the fibreglass moldings.

The spinnaker should be raised in 4 pulls.



Washer on recovery line

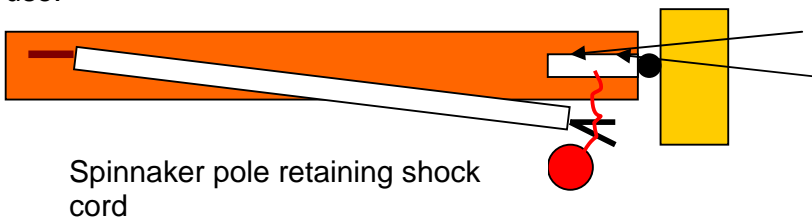
Shockcord

Wide spinnaker chute opening feeding into sock restricted to foredeck

It is useful to have a 2:1 loop on the outhaul with a spot of elastic to assist in placement.

Again a 2:1 loop on the downhaul can help in adjusting the sail setting.. When setting the main you are looking for a good aerofoil section from the mast at the top of the sail.. In very windy conditions you can de-power the sail by increasing the kicker and pulling on the downhaul. In doing this be careful not to overstress your gaff. In demonstrating this Peter found that the end connection on my boom to the mast was damaged. The screws had enlarged the holes in the boom and there was considerable play. Since this was under a band of glass-fibre tape, I hadn't spotted this during winter maintenance. Check yours now...Well before you next want to sail. It was easy enough to plug and replace but could be a weak point and if it fails could lead to a change to a metal boom.

Most of the squad boats have a fly-away spinnaker pole and the arrangement for these is given in the previous notes which hopefully will appear on the HHSC club website (or ask me for a copy) – as well as an article on the Mirror Association website. A useful tip to keep the end of the pole from swinging about in the boat is to fit a clamp along the boom or more simply a piece of shock cord with a ball on the end to slip into the end vee when not in use.



Spinnaker pole retaining shock cord

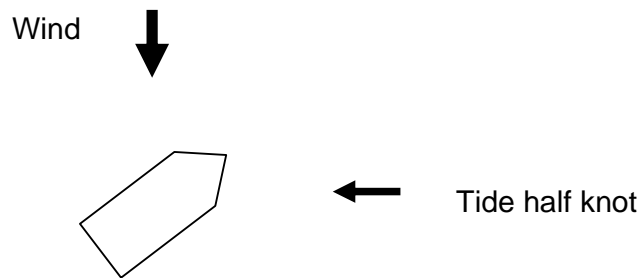
Check screw fixings on boom.

Another simple trick is to move the knot on the gaff away from the top of the mast to enable the gaff to fit snugly against the mast. See previous HHSC Mirror tips. Ensure that the gaff halyard does not stretch. You might also need a conventional cleat as a back-up to keep the gaff in place since the self locking cleats can be unreliable and a rapidly descending gaff is dangerous.

Having looked over the boats and given advice on specific improvements we returned to the classroom for tactical advice.

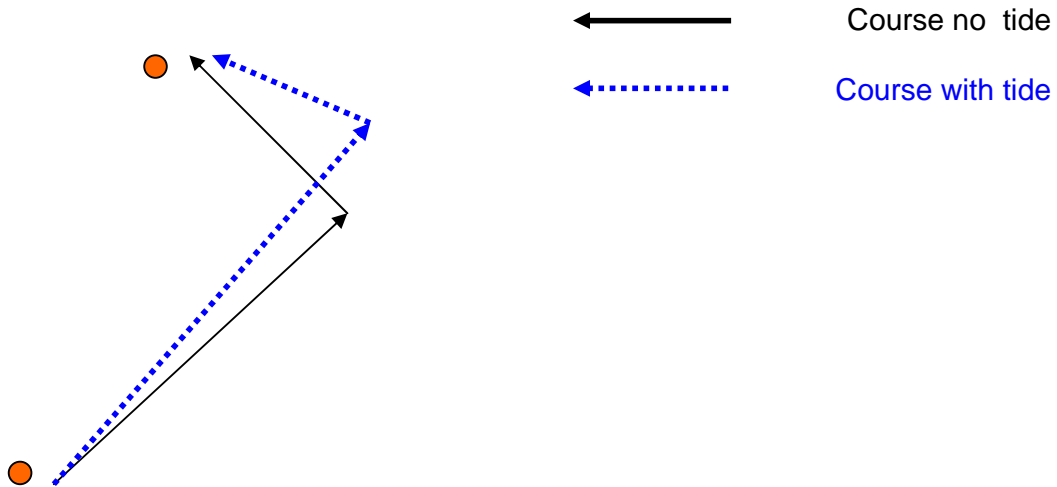
Tides.

Hill Head is tidal and it pays to be aware of the tides and make best use of them.

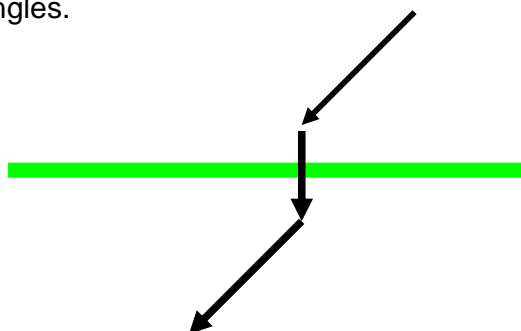


In this instance it is better to tack into the tide – lee bow effect maximising the port tack with minimum starboard tack..

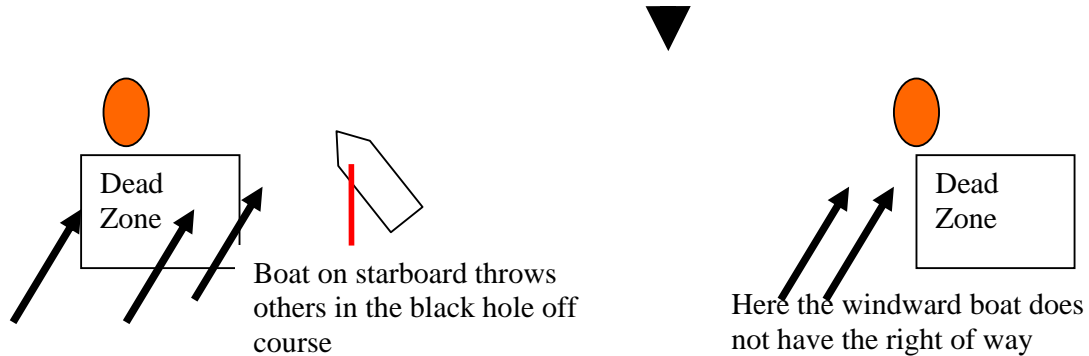
Always do the **longest tack first**



Be aware that the wind will speed up crossing the land and that it will cross it at right angles.



At the start avoid the dead zones at either end of the start lines

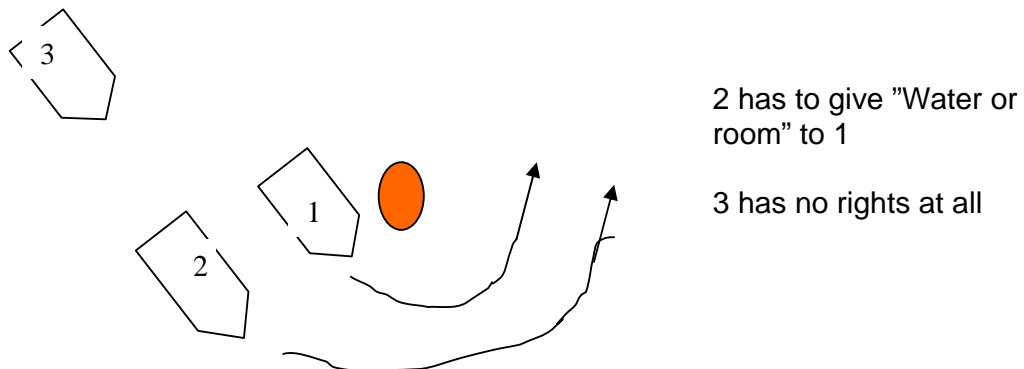


Look for transits along the start line to keep the right side.

Keep to your **“Proper course”** Which is the direct course you would sail **irrespective** of anyone else’s course. Which can of course be difficult to protest.

Must take care to not hit another boat even if you are in the right.

Rounding a mark the rules of port and starboard give way to rules around a mark..



Rounding a mark aim for **Wide in – Close out**

If you heel the boat to **leeward it will go about**
If you heel the boat to **windward it will gybe**

This means that by following these actions you will not need to use the brake, sorry the rudder.

Another sacred point drummed into us whilst learning to sail was exploded.
We should not sail flat and level in a Mirror.....

Downwind heel the boat to windward!!!!
Upwind heel to leeward !!!!

This will result in a smaller wetted area, and hence less resistance.

We then took to the water in light winds to play follow the leader and race around a course to put our new found skills into practice.

Many thanks to Peter for an informative and enjoyable session.

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