

US SAILING - ONE-DESIGN CLASS COUNCIL FLEET CAPTAIN'S MANUAL

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Acknowledgments

We thank all of the contributors to this manual, whether or not they know they are represented here. During the three-year production phase, material was collected during USYRU/US SAILING meetings and culled from submissions in response to requests in the ODCC Updates sent to the officers of 150 one-design classes. Input was also solicited in *American Sailor* magazine and in many class newsletters on numerous occasions. The sources, footnoted at the end of this manual include some of the best known (or just *best*) one-design stalwarts in the country. We know you will benefit from the concepts they share here.

There are, however, several people who have stood by me during the process and really made this possible. They have helped by organizing and participating in the continuing series of class management/fleet development seminars which have accompanied Spring and Fall Meetings of US SAILING for many years. They have been encouraging since the idea of "a short fleet building pamphlet" originated at a meeting of the ODCC's One-Design Growth Subcommittee at the 1989 AGM in Fort Lauderdale. Some have kept in touch by phone or FAX, others simply sent material. Without their help, this resource would not be available to you today.

So, **THANK YOU** John Burnham, Greg Fisher, Clark Chapin, John Snow, Joan Thayer, Bob Shiels, Bruce Moore, Tom Payne, Bob Johnstone, Jocelyne Broadribb, Tom Ehman Jr., Janet Baxter, and Lee Parks for your direction and patience.

Mark Lobo
Catalina 22 Class
One-Design Class Council
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FORWARD

This manual is a resource to enable you to best perform the job of fleet captain. One of its most noticeable characteristics is that it is loose-leaf bound. Why? Because it must be a dynamic, evolving compilation of material to suit your particular fleet. It was conceived by the One-Design Class Council (ODCC) and includes information distilled from a decade of fleet building, development, management and promotional material. The contributors, listed at the end, include many names you will recognize from the world of one-design. They have offered their ideas freely and enthusiastically because they, like you, think that the sport of sailing is enhanced by association.

If you are the first owner of this manual, place these pages in a view binder (such as K & M Co. #5389420). Next, insert the cover sheet and binding label and add tabs between the sections. Then insert all of the material supplied by your national/international one-design class association in the appropriate section. Include existing fleet-specific material such as your bylaws, roster and current newsletter. The manual should grow with new material as it is used; thus you and the fleet captains before and after you become the major contributors. So be sure to add your name to the list of contributors at the end!

If you have any suggestions for improvement or items you feel may be of general interest for inclusion in the next edition of this resource, please forward them to the ODCC in care of US SAILING. If your interest lies beyond your fleet, you will find more detailed, universal information in the US SAILING *Class Management Handbook*.

We hope you will maintain this manual while you are fleet captain and pass it along to your successor. Perhaps you will find it useful to have several copies which can become the property of each of your fleet officers. Just remember to keep the manual alive by using it; fleets need attention and support along with organization if they are to grow and prosper.

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The National and International Connection

Your fleet is one of many throughout the country charged with promoting the sport in your particular one-design class. Your national or international association (NA/IA) is the best source of material and class-specific information about your fleet management. Along with class racing rules and measurement proscriptions, your NA/IA provides material through its publication about boat maintenance, equipment and fleet-oriented subjects like training and entertainment. You should include all of the fleet-oriented material in this manual.

Among the useful information available from your NA/IA:

- 1) Fleet formation package - Whether you are forming a new fleet or picking up the helm of an established one, the latest material available about formation is crucial. These packages include class rules, history data of the class, listings of current fleets and leaders and tips on fleet building specific to your class.
- 2) Listings of association members in your area - There may be a number of members of your class nearby of whom you are unaware. Your class secretary or editor regularly receives inquiries from interested potential sailors. Often these inquiries are timely in nature, so make sure these potential fleet members know about your fleet. Help your class secretary help you by keeping communications open.

Your national officers love to receive mail. These people are in their position because of their expertise, so if you have any questions about the class, write them. Be specific in your requests. Usually there is a history file in the possession of each officer; they will be glad to copy you with material relevant to your interests. Of course, be patient for a response. The officers of a healthy class have tons of work.

Although this manual offers many ideas and suggestions for running your fleet, your national or international class association is the best resource for information unique to your class. Use the resource!

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The Competition Side of the Sport

Your one-design class exists for a number of reasons, and racing usually ranks high on the list. Even if you are part of a cruising class, a one-design regatta is a major event no matter how competitive or athletically challenging. Be sure to stay informed of any activity in your area, whether it is a local, state, regional, national or world championship²

¹. Emphasize to your fleet the advantages of participation in these events; help promote them in your newsletter. Focus on the fleet members who are most likely to travel by contacting them personally.

When your fleet members return from a regatta, take advantage of what they've learned. In the section on Training you will find many ideas for format and content of training sessions; for instructors you can draw from among those who travel. Remember, even if your only fleet member going to the regionals this Spring is a new sailor, they probably rubbed shoulders with the hot-shots and can bring back information on new techniques, tactics, hardware and rigging.

The United States Sailing Association (US SAILING) is the governing body for the sport of sailing. The purpose of US SAILING is summarized in its bylaws in nine distinct statements having to do with racing, education and training. Communication, by way of the annual *Directory* and monthly *American Sailor* magazine, is a significant element of its mission. Your class is probably a member, and is represented by the One-Design Class Council (If not, it should be--check with your national officers to be sure).

Among the racing functions, a number of championships are established to promote competition among US SAILING members. These include junior events (Sears Cup, Bemis, Smythe and Massachusetts Bay Trophies), men's (Mallory Cup), women's (Adams Trophy), team racing and more. A ladder series is conducted first by local sailing associations (SA), then by regional areas to qualify for the finals. You can support these championships by offering loaner boats (often the association level events are sailed in classes other than those to be sailed in the finals).

Your fleet can affiliate with the SA representing the sailing waters near you, gaining access to certified judges, race officers and the appeals procedure. You will also benefit from competition news along with formal race organization expertise. Remember, your class association is a small part of the world of sailing, and US SAILING can be a great resource to help your fleet grow.

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Structure

A one-design fleet can function in two ways: independent or as a sub-division of an established club. There are many variations on either theme, however fleet structure and organization will be similar regardless of size.

The Independent Fleet

Often found in metropolitan areas surrounded by several bodies of water, this type of fleet draws members from several clubs. A unique advantage of the independent fleet is the ability to bring in the new sailor, long before they can commit to a structured sailing program. Management of the independent fleet demands lots of attention and leadership structure to share the many responsibilities.

Advertise - depending on your class, your approach to spreading the word about your fleet will take very different characteristics.

A popular, well established class like Sunfish, Hobie 14 or Catalina 22 draws new sailors due to the large number of available used boats. Try to focus on this group. New sailors buy these boats because the investment is low, and they may be trying sailing as an alternative to another sport. Asking for help from a dealer is possible, but focus on contacting these sailors on the water. Though difficult, it's your best avenue. Try these tactics:

- 1) Carry extra issues of your last newsletter, membership forms, and national association material with you at all times. Pass this along to people you don't know when you see them on the dock, at the ramp or at an all-class regatta; make the materials available at boat shows.
- 2) A business card size invitation is extremely effective. The card should have your class logo, a friendly greeting, words of introduction, fleet number, your name and phone number. This card can serve in place of a lot of bulky paper (especially if the prospective member has nothing more on than a bathing suit!).
- 3) Get the names and phone numbers of the people you meet and call them to announce your fleet's next event (better yet, have one of your other organizers call; the more people involved in these introductions, the more credible the fleet).

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The Fleet-Within-a-Club

Every sailing club, yacht club or community sailing program has people associated with one-design class sailboats. By definition, these sailors are fleet members. The fleets are characterized in many ways: some simply may be loose-knit groups identifiable only on the race course, while other fleets are structured within the club's management. Other "one-design sailing clubs" are made up entirely of fleets.

However your fleet is organized, and independent of the structure, several key elements of fleet formation are universal.

Officers

The fleet captain needs help. If you've reviewed this manual thoroughly you have no doubt decided that, so be sure you have enough willing crew to keep the fleet running right. Like a car engine, one good "spark plug" will not do the job! As a fleet captain, you may have heard this term applied to you. Not only will you be overburdened with tasks, but the other potential members of the fleet will not be inspired to contribute. The more fleet advocates you can tap, the more credibility your fleet will have.

Your fleet bylaws should include the specific offices and titles for fleet management. Make sure the following is covered:

- Fleet Captain - responsible for all fleet activities, committee structure, and relationships with local sailing club and national association.
- Secretary - keeps fleet activity records and database of members; records minutes of all meetings and assists all other officers with correspondence.
- Treasurer - maintains the bank account, reports financial condition to the officers, collects fees and pays bills; this office can be combined with the Secretary if personnel is limited.
- Editor - responsible for the newsletter; if this office is combined with another, make sure that the editor is fair in reporting and strives to include material dealing with all fleet functions.
- Measurer - responsible for assuring that fleet members' boats adhere to the one-design rules for their class.

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Officers

Specific duties of the officers should be tailored to the needs of your fleet. Many suggestions are included throughout this manual; just be sure your bylaws include the general responsibilities. If your membership has enough depth, your fleet should also have officers or committee chairs responsible for entertainment and training.

One often overlooked subject is insurance, usually handled by those in charge of events. If someone in your fleet has a background in the business, ask them to help review your needs. Someone should be familiar with liability coverage provided by fleet member's personal insurance, floater policies, US SAILING insurance programs and other marine policies.¹

Don't feel obligated to change officers each year, unless someone wants out. In short, don't fix what works well.²

Committees

To do the work, or play, the load must be shared among your active members. After a direction is set, a schedule prepared or broad objective outlined by your officers, a committee is the tool to get things done. Your fleet should have two types of committees: standing and special or *ad hoc*. The standing committees implement the functions of your officers, while special committees are formed to manage regattas, large parties or construction/maintenance projects. A committee does not necessarily need to be limited to fleet members. Often having someone from the marina, boat dealer, commercial sponsor or even another fleet join the committee *ex officio* can be very helpful.

The officers in charge of the various functions can hand-pick the committee chairs or head the committees themselves. The chairs will select their own committee members. In this way, it is likely the committee members will be compatible. Try to spread the responsibility around: have Spring and Fall race committee chairs and different hosts of entertainment functions. Try to avoid overloading your officers.

One option is to have the group of volunteers making up the committee select the person to act as chair. This way, loyalty to the chair is instilled democratically among the diverse members. It also adds variety to a committee and enables each member to have an equal influence.

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The Membership

Every member of your fleet should be on at least one committee. Membership forms should contain preference questions to find out the favorite activities of each member. Suggest to the committee chair that the member be either asked to serve on the committee or at least observe the committee function at a policy meeting.

Musings on Management

"A major problem lies with our yacht clubs. They must get back to basics. Sailors need water and therefore our clubs were started on some of the finest real estate in the world for the purpose of going to sea to race sailboats. The evolution of a sailing club is programmable and occurs in the following chronological order: dinghies, ramps, cranes, clubhouse, snack bars, dining rooms, yachts, power boats, swimming pools, and tennis courts. When all this happens after a few decades, the members forget why the club was there in the first place. An example of what happens is that a famous Long Island yacht club recently voted in favor of lights on the tennis courts, turning down a new crane. I have always thought that a good way to ensure that sailing clubs keep their direction is to have all meetings on an island and you must be able to sail a Snipe there to go to the meetings."³

Recipe for Success²

Ingredients:

- 1) 5 or more eager skippers
- 2) 5 or more enthusiastic crews
- 3) 1 lot-wives, girlfriends, children, relatives, friends, newcomers
- 4) 1 gallon public visibility
- 5) 1 bushel fun and excitement
- 6) 10 pounds helpful, friendly attitude
- 7) 1 ocean, gulf, lake or river

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Commercial Support Sources

One-design sailing is a sport and hobby for you. As your fleet building efforts progress, many of your potential members will find that time-division between fun and work prevent them from helping you as much as you would like. So bring in the pros!

- 1) Marinas - The foremost resource for a good fleet, but sometimes the toughest to convince. Make personal contacts and relate to the owner, manager and employee from the angle of "it's good for business". Sailors don't buy a lot of fuel, but they benefit the marina through advertising. Exposure in the media during a regatta or other special event is worth much to a commercial enterprise.
- 2) Sailboat dealers - This is a natural relationship, yet must also be cultivated carefully. Maintain rapport with the entire staff; let them be the first to know about special events you have planned so that they can spread the word. It's easy if the dealer sells your one-design class boat; but even if they don't, they can help your fleet with all the accessories needed for performance sailing. Make them feel needed!
- 3) Local businesses - Your local beverage distributor, copy shop, sportswear boutique . . . even a hair salon might need an exposure boost from association with your fleet. Offer them sailing afternoons as giveaways in return for cash or in-kind sponsorship.

Growth

Once your fleet is up and running, keep it healthy with a concerted membership program. Appoint a membership chair, surely the second most important position next to the Editor. This person should be outgoing and committed to your class. They will be the ambassador at local boat shows, to sailboat dealers and marinas. Have them talk to the "tail-enders" in other fleets. If their fleet is not showing them much interest, you stand to gain a new fleet member or at least a friend of your fleet. Also have them stay in touch with inactive owners. Life situations change, all it may take is a friendly phone call to get them active again.⁴

Try a fleet purchase program, if your club has the resources to buy boats. You can draw sailors to your fleet and class by making it financially desirable. (Note: this works for boats or sails.)

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Newsletter

In general, any format is fine, but whatever seems to work is best. An easy suggestion is to instruct the author/editor to simply imagine that he or she is writing a newsy letter about the fleet to one other fleet member. It can be very informal, even rambling, and may well be better that way. A sense of humor can make a newsletter even better, and don't miss the opportunity to poke gentle fun, especially at your champions. Mention everyone's name you can in every newsletter, especially the newcomers and those who are struggling. And include complete results with crew names and finishes from first to last. A fleet newsletter should be "inclusive" and make everyone feel as though they belong. It's also vanity press, and let's face it, everyone is looking for their name in each issue.

The principal pitfall of the informal approach is that you still must make sure that the important dates, times and phone numbers are readily evident. Include phone numbers and contact information for all fleet functions/offices in every issue, ideally in a standardized form so fleet members get used to referring to the same place in the newsletter as a resource. Other "hard" data to include are major agenda items prior to meetings and informative minutes afterwards as appropriate.

This first issue should have a large press run to allow distribution through your favorite local commercial sources. Have a fleet member deliver them personally. Consider mailing two copies to each current member and suggest they pass on the second to a potential member.

Don't let a blank page go to waste: duplicate a "how-to" or other interesting sailing article from a magazine or the ODCC's SNAX (Sailing Newsletter Article eXchange). Bits of the calendar should be placed in strategic places.

Another way to fill space and gather opinions on important subjects is to include a questionnaire. Keep it short, 3 to 5 items, and try to print it on the back side of the sheet containing the address so it can be torn off without taking news with it. Poll the fleet on racing venue, social functions, training subjects and opinions on newsletter format and content. Ask for volunteers; it's worth it if you snag one response out of a dozen requests. Make sure the results of surveys appear in a succeeding issue.

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Newsletter

The best newsletters are seamless. Regularity, standard format, people orientation and lots of news make for a readable, anticipated publication. Even better is having someone put it together using graphics-capable software. The "kitchen-table" newsletter, though, is still capable of looking great. (Many of us, and many of those we're close to, have done these; it's a lot of work, right?) The main thing is, give the paper a lot of information and news, and strive to make it look attractive. The following are tips compiled by the past editor of the 1990 "best fleet newsletter" award of a large one-design association.⁵

1. **NEWSLETTER NAME:** Establish a name for your newsletter, hopefully with a generic nautical theme, that would appeal to both racing and cruising sailors. Some examples would be "Ships Log", "Trade Winds", "Foghorn", "Gusty", "The Old Glassy", "The New Moon", etc. Look in the glossary of sailing books, such as "Royce's Sailing Illustrated" for ideas.
2. **GRAPHICS:** Make a good first impression with an attractive appearance and layout. Have a fleet member design a quality masthead that will be used consistently for your newsletters. The most effective format is 11" by 17", folded once to make four pages. It almost mails itself.

If copying is a problem or you are including distinct, separate items such as membership forms, regatta or cruise announcements, 8-1/2" by 11" is fine. But fold all the stuff together and use an envelope! In this case, the fleet stationery is appropriate. You need not bother with a name for the publication; it's a memo. But don't let that stifle your creativity. Use various colors of paper stock, borders and orientations to catch the eye of the reader.

3. **"CLIP ART":** Make copies of illustrations or "clip art", from sailing magazines, books, calendars, etc. that can be used to add to the appearance and break up your text, etc. One source is the Mystic Seaport Catalog, featuring cookbooks with excellent nautical illustrations.
4. **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Include photographs of your fleet members and fleet activities to add the personal touch to your newsletter. Don't be too concerned about quality of reproduction by photocopiers; remember, content is the major consideration.

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5. **CONTENT:** In addition to news and schedules of activities on the local scene, discuss what is happening in your national association. "How to" and technical articles, sailing and boating related educational programs (Red Cross/CPR Classes, Power Squadron courses, etc.) are good choices.

No need to reinvent the wheel. Many good ideas are "borrowed" from other sailing publications. Ask other sailing clubs to put you on their mailing list and reciprocate by putting their editor on yours.
6. **SPONSORSHIP:** Solicit sponsorship from boating-related business to help finance the printing and publishing cost of your newsletter. A tip from SNAX: your local copy shop might handle the printing for a small acknowledgment.
7. **MARKETING/P.R. TOOL:** A quality newsletter is not only a means of communication to your members, but also a prospective member recruitment tool. Place copies at dealers and marinas. Your national one-design association officers and sponsors should also be on your mailing list.

The Editor - Your Key Player

A wide range of background can make someone qualified to be editor, although it's nice to have one with a journalism degree. Make sure this person is reliable; a sailor who is always comfortably cruising the line 5 minutes prior to the warning signal is a good candidate. The best person to write the newsletter is the person who will do it! The ideal newsletter editor is organized, reliable, punctual and is situated first on the fleet grapevine. In the absence of Mr. or Ms. Ideal, find a person who is simply reliable and punctual, and get them to call the fleet gossip for the news when he or she needs information.⁶

If your editor is charged with preparing, printing and mailing the newsletter, give them a break with appeals for news. You can be of great help in securing contributors.

And thank your editor when they've done well and encourage them when they are having problems.

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Contributors

Getting the material to edit is the worst part, and the fleet captain is the one ultimately responsible for the communication among the members. Your fleet members like to hear from you! Drop them a reminder note after they've chaired an event or received an award, or even had a notable experience. Of course, upcoming event news and promotion should be a big part of the newsletter, so make sure the regatta announcements or entertainment invitations are being prepared well in advance of the events.

Newsletter Content

Schedule of Events

Many options exist for the best way to publish the upcoming events, so consider it carefully because it is of utmost importance. As soon as the calendar is set, it should appear in its entirety, ideally on a separate sheet. This sheet could be on heavier stock to make it more durable. One fleet uses 5.5" by 17", in portrait format with an accordion fold to make it easy to pocket or hang on a wall.

Include a three-month excerpt from the calendar on the front page of each issue. Try a grid format if your graphics capability can handle it; otherwise use tabs and columns to make the reader's eye snap to this crucial information.

News from fleet officers

Every issue must have an article from each officer or their designee. Simple. Your members must feel like they are sharing in all the activities and business of the fleet. They should know everything, as told by those responsible for everything. If the member isn't a regular participant, works on weekends or has odd hours, the fleet newsletter is the main link to them. Keep the chain strong.

Race Results

Don't leave fleet members in suspense. Everybody wants to see results. If timing between regular newsletters is a problem, make sure that a special edition is published. Again, give the editor a break and encourage the event chair to arrange for the press releases.

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The Telephone

A call is a secondary means of communication, but a primary tool for establishing a personal link to your national association officers. Make it count!

- 1) Have a purpose to your call. Make a list of specific items to discuss.
- 2) Show the national officers you appreciate their efforts. Thank them for their help at the time you make the request for information. Your call should be a follow-up to your written request; but avoid sounding insistent or testy. Be sure to send them a note about the results.
- 3) Keep a log of your calls - The most over-looked aspect of phone communication is the record value of the call. A 20 or 30 minute conversation can be costly and worthless if you don't take notes. Keep a steno pad at your desk at home and if you take a call elsewhere, make a note and tape it to a page on your pad when you return to it. Date everything!

Publicity

In addition to publishing the news, make sure everyone in your geographical area knows you exist. Tap someone who is outgoing to be your media contact person. They should strive to get your fleet coverage in a local newspaper or TV or radio station at least once a year.

Turn a regatta, training session or community oriented program into a media event. Public Service Announcements should be prepared, mounted on 3" by 5" cards and delivered to radio stations for best results.

Posters are great attention-getters and serve the purpose best if the event they publicize is six months or more in the future. If you have a good graphics artist in the fleet, keep them busy; non-event specific posters keep your fleet's visibility high.

Keep other fleets in your area informed of your calendar and reciprocate by plugging their open events to encourage traveling.

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Written Correspondence

Your greatest tool is the US Postal system. Though this is the electronic data age, the best way to keep in touch with members of your one-design class is by letter. True! Computer files are wonderful for word processing, modems and fax machines are great for instant contact (did you know images on fax paper disappear over time?). But a letter can be read, copied, redistributed and filed by anybody, with no special hardware or knowledge required.

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The Social Scene

"...fleet development depends far more on the provision of supportive social interaction than on the characteristics of the boat"⁷

The comment above comes from one of the top sailing journalists in the world, known best for his detailed descriptions of action on the race course. Dr. Stuart Walker knows that fleets are bolstered by the shoreside activity in addition to that on the water. If your fleet is composed of sailors who enjoy telling stories at a party more than actually living those stories, you know how important entertainment events can be. If you only see other fleet members at the starting line and around the marks, plan at least one party per season or series. These will give everyone a chance to relax and shore-up friendships.

Personnel

Whether your fleet is focused on racing, training or partying, it needs someone to coordinate the fun. To deal with the crucial tasks of making off-the-water events pleasurable, the person needs to have special skills. They should:

- 1) be personable, likable (to succeed in 2, below)
- 2) have good organizing abilities
- 3) be creative
- 4) be able to handle publicity and publication tasks
- 4) know how to handle food arrangements
- 5) be tactful in dealing with host clubs or marinas and their managers

These traits are all important, and rarely will be found in one person. Make sure that a committee exists to fill in the required roles with the best talent in the fleet.

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Entertainment Activities

Special events are needed to pull together the fleet members. Sailing is a recreational sport, so it has to be fun.

Ideas for the water:

- Sailing Derby (Man Overboard, Slalom, Sailing Backward)⁸ Get creative with this, except emphasize real sailing skills rather than racing tactics.
- Race without tillers.
- Blindfolded skippers or crews racing.
- Single-handed race for classes normally carrying crews, or multi-handed races if your class is normally single-handed.
- Watermelon Race - Race Committee drops the melons at random spots in the fleet's sailing area. Hints can be given to participants or just let them go "fish". Winners get to keep the melons, but are required to share with all.²

Ideas for onshore:

- Theme parties to cap-off a fun race, novice series or training session. Tie the entertainment to what happened on the water.
- Pot-luck dinners - Keep it simple, have everyone bring something. Generally avoid major parties after regular series racing because sailors may be more inclined to wind-down informally or just pack in for the air-conditioning.
- Miniature golf or beach volleyball tournaments can be held in conjunction with regattas; if the weather is too poor for sailing the participants still get to play.

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Get the whole fleet involved⁹

SUNFISH: Fun races -- blindfold the skipper, and have the crew coach him around the course, backward races, treasure hunts, etc. (Try a balloon race. Keeping them in the boat to return to shore for the count is the hard part.) Big brother/sister program matching an "A" fleet skipper with a "B" fleeter for the season.

J/24: Run short races in light air -- more people have a chance of winning. Have a cruise -- a full moon wine and cheese party. Emphasize the social side for family benefit. Give special awards: Youngest, oldest, sportsmanship, etc. Call people and encourage them to come sail.

THISTLE: Racquetball tournaments, etc. (One Snipe fleet has a miniature golf tournament during one regatta. The winner gets as much publicity as the winner of the races. Also have a net and volleyball for use while waiting for the wind. That keeps the crowd there until the wind does appear -- and uses up some of that youthful energy!)

Food - A major element of regatta success¹⁰

"I remember the Laser Midwinters when it was held at Apollo Beach in Florida around 1980. The local Laser dealer fed the entire 200 sailor fleet for three days. His strategy was to rent a U-Haul tandem trailer which he towed behind his truck to the local meat packers where they loaded up with a couple of thousand hot dogs and hamburgers. The next stop was the food warehouse for buns, ketchup, mustard, relish, pickles, soft drinks and charcoal . . . on the way to the club he filled the remaining space with ice. The result, everybody who wanted to could eat for the whole regatta. Some of us opted for a restaurant once in a while to vary the diet; but let me tell you, for the younger sailors there on a limited budget they thought they had died and gone to heaven.

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Performance Sailing

Of the many "best reasons" for keeping an active, enthusiastic fleet together, racing is always near the top of the list. A strong racing program is crucial to a fleet's success, even though cruising and social functions may be better attended. Often the equipment and management of racing involve much of the fleet's financial resources. The reason for this interest is that racing, no matter how informal, brings the fleet members to the water. To promote racing and gain the strength it gives to a fleet, the emerging concept of performance sailing is commonly used as a more marketable term. That's why the United States Yacht Racing Union is now US SAILING!

For us to achieve performance sailing regularly, we must spend time on the race course. Racing feeds the quest for performance and refines skills that we would not normally use when cruising. When you have lived through a couple of windy, crowded take-downs at leeward marks, you can douse the chute with confidence on the occasions you've been out on a short-handed cruise and the wind suddenly pipes up. From a safety standpoint, racing is for all of us.

The Sailing Instructions

The foundation of a successful racing program is your Sailing Instructions (SIs). Your class or sailing association may have sample SIs you can use. Include modifications such as sailing area descriptions, local rules, protest procedure, schedules and the like. SIs should include only two types of statement: the intentions of the race committee and the obligations of competitors. They should be concerned only with racing. Other Information, such as measurement regulations, issuance of moorings, and the like should be in a separate document.¹¹

If you race as a fleet under the authority of a larger club, the SIs can be brief and include only items unique to your class. Make sure that a reference to any national class proscription is included if they are not repeated. The purpose of the SIs is to allow a visitor who has just entered the class to have all the information necessary to successfully and safely sail with your fleet.

The Rules

Be sure to cite the International Yacht Racing Rules as the basis for your local rules. Clear guidelines defining the "good manners and sportsmanship" referenced in Rule 75.1 can be the best preventative for long hours in the protest room, or worse, hard feelings and animosity against "sea lawyers".

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Organization

As Fleet Captain, you may be the person responsible for racing, or just the most anxious that the racing program is run well.

Unless it's a points regatta, always have lots of short fun races instead of the two or three-mile-beat Olympic triangle. After each series always praise newcomers when they did well on a particular leg of a race, and do everything in your power to help them improve. After any type of race, make sure that crews get proper recognition. This means crew trophies too! Always call crews by their individual names when giving awards. Also make sure the behind-the-scene efforts are recognized. It's the academy awards -- thank everybody!¹²

Some ideas from classes:

WINDMILL: Invite the general public to crew for you. (Lief Zars described a "crew roster" system worked out for the Lake Canyon fleet in the Bulletin several years ago.)

PENGUIN: Have a well-used boat put in racing shape by fleet volunteers. It is loaned out to prospective members and sold to new or prospective members at the end of the season. (This is good junior bait.)

FLYING SCOT: Winning skippers of a fleet are given handicaps in order to allow those in the middle of the pack to compete for trophies. Or try the following:

Spread the Trophies Around

Develop a formula to split the fleet to allow newcomers and novices to compete for a separate set of trophies. Establish criteria, such as new to sailing, new to the class, age or whatever is appropriate to create this division. This group could have a separate start for races; or if your fleet is small, they can be thrown into the fray with everybody. Make sure their boats are identified, and establish rules which give them the benefit of the doubt in certain right-of-way situations such as overlaps and luffing rights only when they encounter a boat from the "experienced" division. Give this group a clever title that is not degrading, but rather light-hearted. For their trophies, it doesn't have to be fancy to make a big impression. And after one of these sailors wins a trophy, they are banished from the division and must race with the experienced members. This allows everyone in the fleet to compete on their own level with a shot at some silver without having to set their goals too high.¹²

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Technical Aspects

You must do everything possible to insure that all boats in your fleet are "class legal" at all times. Every boat's hull, spars, blades, sails, fittings, running rigging, standing rigging, weight and miscellaneous equipment must be in accordance with Class Rules in order for your fleet to:

- 1) Have fair racing and therefore the most fun.
- 2) Maintain the greatest dollar value for each member's boat.
- 3) Help members be knowledgeable and more competitive and have more fun at regional or national regattas.

You should also be sure every member knows the do's and don'ts of launching, retrieving, trailering, storing, winterizing and all other aspects of maintenance relating to your particular class in order to:

- 1) Preserve the hull's weight, shape and racing finish as well as those of the blades and spars etc. and thus the boat's market value.
- 2) Prolong the life of your member's sails and thereby minimize their cost of sailing.
- 3) Have your fleet prepared to take the necessary action to protect its boats from harm during disasters such as storms, floods etc.

Appoint a "Technical Officer" and an assistant if possible and delegate them to acquire and understand the latest class rules and measurement procedures from the class officers. Disseminate updates to your members through seminars, newsletters, inspection, etc. Enthusiastic members with detailed technical backgrounds, such as engineers, pilots, doctors, lawyers, etc are usually good prospects.¹

Make sure that fleet members are aware of major rules changes being considered by your class association. Seek their opinions on controversial subjects during meetings or through correspondence. It's *your* fleet . . . if the rules are a problem for you, someone in another location has the same problem.

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Good Sailors = Healthy Fleet

If racing is the glue that holds a fleet together, training is the element that keeps a racing program strong. The variety of skills necessary to succeed on the race course can all be cultivated through fleet member interaction. The "secrets" you learn on the beach, launching ramp or dock shouldn't be yours alone, but fair knowledge for anyone taking part in your racing program. If you help fleet members become better sailors, you can't lose; if they beat you on the course, you have succeeded in your training skills.

As fleet captain, you must make sure all of the elements of your one-design class are addressed in a formal training program. Don't miss any aspect of sailing; target these general topics:

- 1) **Hardware** - Cultivate the understood route to a fast boat. Stress that whatever is done must be class legal
- 2) **Boat handling** - Where to sit, when to pull the strings, why and how to roll tack
- 3) **Tactics** - *fast* must be accompanied by *smart*

A Snipe Angle

Dick said to Jane, "Look at the pretty sailboat". Just how do you take a Dick and Jane and produce racing sailors? The answer to this question is relatively simple in theory, but difficult to execute. It's simply a matter of teaching them: how to buy a boat, how to sail, how to care for their equipment, and especially how to deal with the frustrations of being a beginner. The secret lies in communication. You simply **MUST** talk to them, as they try to rig, as you pass them on the course, and as they put up their boats, defeated by wind, by difficulties in cooperation, by lack of faith in each other's skill, and by doubts of sanity. There must be someone to sympathize, to make suggestions for next time. Then there needs to be follow-up by phone during the week, providing encouragement and a reason to tackle this insanity most of us love. Another program that we are proud of is our Winter sailing seminar series...[held] from the first of January until the Snipe Mid-winter Circuit. Each session is self-contained so that missing one is not crucial to understanding the next.¹³

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Have a Clinic²

If you really want to build a new fleet, or rebuild a dying fleet, just think back and remember what hooked you and merely repeat the process with others. It's simple and it works! Invite them to attend a catamaran sailing clinic sponsored by your group or fleet. Don't just do it haphazardly, but spend a little time and effort to make it an event. Invite your local TV sports or weather commentator to attend. Use your imagination! Invite some people that will put your group in the limelight. Most importantly, make sure you get some of the local novice sailors to attend. Put on a show! All of them will really thank you for your help.

A beginning clinic must be well thought out and enthusiastically presented. Things to cover are:

- 1) safe trailering
- 2) mast stepping and boat rigging
- 3) required Coast Guard and other safety equipment
- 4) proper boat launching
- 5) trapeze technique
- 6) sail hoisting and trim
- 7) basic boat handling (how to: tack, gybe, heave to, get out of irons)
- 8) boat righting techniques

Although it should only take 1-1/2 hours to cover all these basics, be prepared to spend about four hours! These people are going to be really interested and will ask a lot of questions. Once you put on a beginner clinic (never call it that because you'll have some sailors who don't think they're beginners), you can announce a series of clinics covering:

- 1) Introduction to Racing
- 2) Racing Rules
- 3) Tactics
- 4) Advanced Racing and Tuning Tips, etc.
- 5) Class Rules: sails, fittings, hull, crew etc.

Now here is where the magic begins to work! Suddenly local media, yacht clubs and other people in your community begin to recognize your group as *The Authority* on sailing in the area.

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Seminar/Clinic Preparation¹⁴

One of the most important keys to a successful program is to know your audience. Try to get a good idea before-hand as to the level of ability of the attendees. If the group's skills are from a broad range, try to involve the audience by encouraging peer assistance. If the audience needs to be stimulated, they should have questions thrown at them. The seminar leader must know what they want to learn; are they there for hard-core instruction or pure enjoyment?

Keep the material interesting. Limit any continuous session to 1-1/2 hours in length. Stick to the topic and, even though the program may be informal, avoid digressing with an excess of stories. Audience involvement is very important, but make sure the leader keeps in control. Use plenty of visual aids: Still camera shots with Polaroid slide film allow presentation of on-the-water situations later during the onshore review of the days activities; video should be employed only if well-produced. Marker board illustrations, flip charts and handouts are only as good as the artwork employed.

The location should be a comfortable size and climate for the expected number of attendees. If food and/or beverages are served, make sure it is light and only an accessory to the program.

Costs should be watched carefully. The instructors should be compensated enough (\$300 to \$500 per day can be anticipated) so that they maintain a level of professionalism. The facility and food costs should be in line with those of the other features. Charge extra for food during all-day events to give those on a tight budget a chance to option it out. Give careful thought to fuel expenses for instructors' boats if the program includes on-the-water sessions.

Notices should be completed 8 to 10 weeks prior to the event. Promotion can never be too heavy. Have all your fleet members act as agents to reach out to other sailors in your locale. Flyers, invitations and registration forms should be in the hands of every potential attendee. This adds up to considerable effort, so try to land a sponsor to help with printing and mailing.

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Together on the Water

Sailing somewhere besides around the marks or to/from the ramp or beach equalizes your fleet members. A day cruise to a favorite anchorage can be particularly beneficial in encouraging new sailors to get involved. The level of participation of a cruising program is much less taxing than that for a regatta; it's a good arena for your newer members or less competitive sailors. Just sailing with the fleet gives your best racers a chance to relax and demonstrate technique without the split-second requirements of around-the-buoys.

A cruise can be a good setting for fun races after the destination has been reached. Try some of the wilder ideas to let spectators have fun along with the sailors. If you just *have* to have a race in conjunction with a cruise, make sure *everyone* is a winner.

Schedule a Cruise

Pick a weekend immediately before or after a racing series. If your locale has a particular season of less-than-perfect sailing conditions, schedule the cruise then. If the weather is bad, your fleet members will have an opportunity to tell sailing stories while lounging on deck, in the sand or around a campfire. A good cruise will ease the pressure and enhance the camaraderie for the whole fleet.

The Destination

Select a location more for its scenery or popularity with campers than sailboat racers. If yours is a trailerable cruising class and the destination is more than an 8 hour drive, consider an interim stop along the highway route. The weary drivers can catch some sleep in the cabin while your caravan stops at a rest area or commercial truck stop. They'll be much more refreshed when the unfamiliar ramp is reached and rigging and launching begins.

Plan the Cruise

Though not as critical as a regatta, a cruise must be carefully structured. If sailing a considerable distance is involved, arrange for alternative destinations based on wind speed. For instance, if the primary anchorage is six hours away from the departure point in a normal wind, identify at least two others that can be reached in the allotted time. Don't shift the schedule because of poor wind--shift the destination. Get the fleet together not so much at a certain place, but for a desired amount of time.

Food

Everyone in the fleet should take part in the food arrangements. Probably the most popular venue is the raft-up buffet, where each boat serves their specialty. If some of your members don't cook, they can help set-up or clean-up.

Safety

If you're going a great distance, be sure to have the local emergency phone numbers and know the locations of service facilities. Someone in the fleet should be the designated safety person and be given the responsibility of keeping track of the participants. Boats should be qualified after a thorough inspection of required safety gear; equipment not

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normally carried (flares, life rings, extra anchor and rode, etc.) may be required. First aid supplies should be carefully inventoried, and all the cruisers made aware of procedures in case something goes wrong.

Waivers should be prepared and signed by all members of the crews holding the fleet and its officers harmless. Consult someone with legal background to create this document.

Create a list of all those participating and leave it with the people at your point of departure. If possible, duplicate it and give it to the participants so they pass it along to their family or friends who will be staying behind. Include the following:

- Description including color, name, registration number, VHF call letters of each boat.
- Names of people to contact for each of the crew in case of emergency.
- Destination including alternatives.
- Scheduled time of arrival at destination and return.

Personnel

Anyone in charge of a cruising event will gain experience applicable to all other aspects of fleet operation. Though most participants will be there for recreation rather than sport, the cruise will at least have a flavor of racing, entertainment and training. Find a fleet member who is not necessarily a racer, but is a competent sailor. They should be responsible and good organizers first; the creativity required for developing the menu and social activities can be shared among the other crews.

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Document how you operate

Maintaining the formal operating documents of a fleet is as important as any other aspect of being a fleet captain. Those who came before you and those who will follow in your position contribute much of their energy to keeping the fleet healthy. Make sure that the best concepts of fleet operation are incorporated in your bylaws. Keep bylaws up-to-date; don't let standard practice override them or you will lose the foundation on which your fleet was built. Consider the following:

- 1) Class Association link - Your fleet members should also be national or international class members. Although painful to incorporate into a loose fleet's bylaws, try it. The link will eventually develop a more informed membership.
- 2) The amount of fleet dues or the procedure to set dues should be included to make the cash flow more formal.
- 3) Define officer responsibilities clearly; lots of detail is okay.
- 4) Be specific about meetings: time of month for board and time of year for general meetings.

(INSERT A COPY OF YOUR BYLAWS FOLLOWING THIS PAGE)

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Handling the Fleet Database

The roster is an important tool, used for generating labels, publishing a yearbook, and even personalizing correspondence. Include the following information:

Names - include nicknames and children's names and ages

Address - include full 9-digit zip codes

Phone - home and business (only if authorized), fax numbers, pagers, etc.

Boats - sail numbers, names, color, location (slip or boatyard position)

Optional - type of business, other boating or volunteer organizations and offices, current committee positions in fleet, past offices held in fleet and years, past championships.

If your fleet records can be computerized you will realize large gains in efficiency, and details are less likely to get lost. Use software that is the most compatible among your leaders to facilitate information exchange. Someone in your fleet will be able to help, even if they do not want to hold an office. Simply maintaining the mailing list or race data is not a big job; if the officers in charge are not computer-capable, make sure they have help from those who are. Consider forming a "computer services" committee.

If a computer operation is beyond your fleet's means, have your secretary keep membership data on 3" by 5" file cards. Tab the cards with colored markers to make committee members easy to find. Use a photocopy matrix to produce mailing labels.

As new members join your fleet, publish their names in your newsletter in exactly the same format as in your roster. Border the section with dotted lines and encourage readers to cut and paste the information in their own roster.

(INSERT A COPY OF YOUR ROSTER FOLLOWING THIS PAGE)

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The Best History Record

The fleet captain should have access to every newsletter in recent history. How far back? How portable is your file system? Programs which were very successful three years ago are totally foreign to you if you just joined last year and got tapped because you are enthusiastic. Don't throw newsletters away; past issues can be good sales tools when trying to bring in new fleet members.

(INSERT YOUR FLEET NEWSLETTERS FOLLOWING THIS PAGE)

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Contributors

The following sources were referenced in this publication. You are urged to continue the evolution of this manual by adding material throughout, in the sections most appropriate. Add the source to the list below and make this manual grow with your fleet. Following these pages, insert reprints of articles about fleet or club operation that won't fit in one of the sections.

If you would like to offer material to be included in future revisions of this manual, or suggestions for improvement, send your ideas to US SAILING, Inshore Office, Box 209, Newport RI 02840-0209

¹Bob Shiels, ODCC Chief Measurer

²Jerry Ashford, *PERFORMANCE SAILOR* - February 1990

³Paul Henderson, "What's Wrong -- And What Can We Do About It", *SNIPE Bulletin* - November 1986

⁴Windmill Class Association Fleet Captains Handbook

⁵George Thomas, Catalina 22 Fleet 111, Grand Lake Oklahoma (1990)

⁶ODCC Fleet Building Seminar, John Burnham (March, 1991)

⁷Stuart Walker, *SAILING WORLD*, (September 1990)

⁸Jim Bryant, *C22 Fleet 111 Captain* (1991)

⁹ODCC seminar, USYRU AGM, Fall 1985

¹⁰Laser Fleet Manual - Winter 91/92 Edition

¹¹Appendix I, Tanzer 22 Fleet Captains Handbook - 1985

¹²Derick Lynch, "The Makings of a Successful Fleet", *MAINSHEET MAGAZINE*, August 1991

¹³Peggy Davis, "Build Fleets By Encouraging Novice Racers", *SNIPE BULLETIN*, July 1983

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