

DeBrief: Winning the Transition & Fred's Top 10

February 10-11, 2018 in Biscayne Bay with Fred Strammer & Phil Muller

Saturday: Phil's DeBrief

To me this weekend was about efficiency and intention. As we continue to grow and develop it is important we remained focused on the small details. The small details I'm talking about are: being on time, being prepared, working hard.

I'm going to review Fred's comments below, but stuck in my head is something he said at our morning meeting, "Being on time requires zero talent. If you're early then you're on time. If you're on time, you're late. If you're late, you're really late."

On the water, we sailed in two different conditions and seastates.

In the heart of the Bay, between the Melges and Marstrom race tracks we saw breeze 14-16 knots an steep chop. In general, it took too long to get flat and dial in rig settings.

When the boat feels off or you are losing your lane you must problem solve. Problem solving requires discussion between crew and action—testing. You need to change one control at a time to sort out what the issue is. This must be your focus. Conduct an FBI like investigation of your boat's performance. Every line is a suspect. Solve the problem.

Teams are very good at talking to each other about something being wrong. Take action.

Sailing under Stiltsville, above the Star course, the water was flat (relatively) and breeze was patchy, ranging from 10-14 knots.

The key sailing in this area was realizing when the boat was making the shift from displacement mode to planing mode. Winning the transition was key. Read more about VMG in the Feb 3 n 4 DeBrief.

In displacement mode (Side Force), the vang can be used as a power up tool. This does two things: 1) flattens draft of middle section of the sail so you can sail with narrow slot and point with a tighter jib. And 2) to close the leech and give return to the upper main so you capture more breeze higher up. Extending the lever arm of the mainsail allows the crew to continue proper trapping technique and drive the boat through weight of the mast.

In Skiff Mode, or planing mode (Driving Force) the vang continues to do it's job just like described above. But it does so to balance the boat and keep the boom low since the mast is bent due to Cunningham.

That was a lot of information, but important to know. How do you win the transitions? By vanging, moding, and shifting the fore/aft position of the hull. In short, while in Side Force get forward and lengthen the waterline by driving the knuckle deep into the water and pulling the bow up. In Driving Force, pull the hull out of the water, reduce drag by stepping back.

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Sunday: Fred's Debrief

1) Time and efficiency. It was clear there were two teams who pushed to get on the water quick. While there were teams who struggled with equipment, waited, and didn't hustle to get on the water.

The attitude you take preparing for the day's sail translates into your effort on the boat. Put your best foot forward. You don't need talent to be on time.

2) Jib trim: In general, too much trimming and changing of jib position. The adjustment for the foot to leech is exponential. A 1 cm change of the sheet translates into a 8 cm or more in the upper leech. Try to shift to incrementally changing the sheet. Recommend that you sew one big stitch of thread into sheet where the cleat is. This way you can easily sight where the jib is trimmed in relation to where your line hits the cleat.

3) Boats need to sail higher upwind. When we started practice everyone was reaching around the Bay. And then looking for height. The first part of the race is upwind. Shift your effort, first find your highest angle. Make some adjustments and sail higher. From that new found high mode discover your modes.

4) Regarding tuning, your approach should be similar. Find the boundary and then work back from it. Recommended that you depower your boat until it feels soft and manageable, then incrementally power it up into you discover your tipping point.

5) Crew's need to find max ease with your anchor sheet hand and then trim from there. To explain this more, the crew's front hand should make a fist, arm flexed up by your face. This is your anchor hand, your max ease hand. All trimming is done with the rear hand on the sheet. The goal is to obviously minimize and settle down sheet range to maintain boat's power and consistency. When a big gust hits, and crew's max out on the sheet – now only holding with front hand – communicate max ease to skipper so the helm can respond. Depower the boat by feathering, hiking harder, or adding vang.

6) The relationship between the Vang and the bottom panel of the sail are overlooked. Outhaul tension changes as the boom is pulled down. Look for the crease and think about the depth of your foot everytime you adjust the vang.

7) Strategic move up the left side. If approaching the port tack layline on course, your target is to tack 4 boat lengths leeward of the port layline. That way, once you cross to the top and tack to starboard lay, you will complete your tack and then enter the zone. In that order.

8) There is a max ease on the main, a max trim and ease on the jib. There is also a max low on trapeze for the crew. Take note during warm ups of where your max low is upwind on each side, especially if the seastate is not square to the breeze and one side forces crews to ride higher to stay dry.

9) When vanging upwind, recognize and call out pressure before it comes. Anticipation.

Question: "if you could maximize an increment in time, wouldn't it be during the entire duration

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of a puff?" Be ready for the entire wavelength or interval of new pressure. Don't be late to the party.

10) Laylines are big opportunities to stretch a lead or give up ladder rungs. Be smart. Strategically, if you can hit layline at 80-90% and lead your opponent back to the middle/axis you are in a winning scenario. If lifted you gain ladder rungs. If headed your opponent loses them. If you ever find yourself well above layline rather than reach to the mark sail off the breeze to layline and then sail highest lane up to it. This is a lose the battle to win the war scenario, lest you leave a gap for port tack hitchers to leebow you.