



# 20 Coaching Strategies For Getting Bigger Fleets



- Focus on speed, then tactics
- Watch out for the “black deck” phenomenon. Really?
- Buddy system: veteran and newbie



- Get an expert who knows that teaching is a learned skill and not “just about me”
- Put a cork in it  
let the people ask before you tell  
use a moderator



- Video on-board expert
- Expert talk before
- Expert talk after
- Get a heavy-weight guest to debrief



- Switch crew/boats/skippers for a race
- Score as teams, use fleet rules; score as golf handicap
- Require neophyte crew
- Crew university



- Short course and drills pre-regatta
- Coaching ashore
- Coach in the boat



- Post-race debrief, expert roundtable
- Coach video review
- Kattack review
- Recognize improvement –  
daily hero, awards for B Fleet



# Example: Coach-TCA

- Seven day course presented during the Thistle Midwinters East.
- Each skipper receives a notebook with the course outline and notes.
  - or the books

*Sailboat Racing with Greg Fisher by TH*

*The Code of Competition by Stuart Walker*





# Content of Coach-TCA

- Core education for faster sailing & tactics
- **Boat speed** is essential to make sense of learning experiences in racing
- Bridge the imaginary social barrier by involving top with less-skilled teams



# Results

- 38 boats at MWE in 1996 – before “Coach”
- 50-68 boats 1997-2008, 45-50 since recession
- 15-20 boats registered for the course each year.
- 4-8 repeat “customers” each year.
- 10+ first-time MWE boats each year.



# Why?

- People will continue sailing as long as they are improving their ability and having fun on and off the water
- We all want to share the joys of sailing with young sailors and new sailors.



# Content of Coach-TCA

- Safety
- Enjoyment & preservation of environment
- Respect for competitors & rules
- How to do regattas



# Activities/Elements

- Up to Six Activities a Day:
  - Weather talk and 2 lessons yesterday
  - Races
  - Coach in the boat
  - Presentation or race debriefing
  - Video or Kattack GPS tracking race review
  - Social



# Sessions

- 6 one hour lecture-discussions or race review, mostly done by sailmakers.
- 7 twenty minute morning sessions about weather & a review of lessons learned yesterday.
- Try this: Kattack GPS tracking for race review.



# Features

- Each skipper and crew sail with a coach aboard for about one hour.
- 10-15 coaches contribute to presentations.
- Everyone at the regatta is welcome at the presentations.
- Participants are strongly encouraged to attend all the regatta social functions.



# Key Elements for Leaders

- Obviously, one recognized expert must be available for the key presentations. Humor and tact are critical skills.
- Adult learners typically do not respect condescending teachers. Adult-to-adult respectful style is necessary.





# Key Elements for Coaches

- We have 10-15 coaches for up to 20 boats.
- It is essential that each coach make a personal commitment to the goals of the course.
- Coaches are given specific written goals for the sessions. The focus is on basic sailing and rig preparation, not minutiae.



# Pricing

- It's an all-volunteer operation
- \$40/boat
- Expenses – notebooks, give-aways, gift cards for the lead coaches.
- The course book:  
*Sailboat Racing with Greg Fisher*



# Results - Feedback

- Sailors absolutely love the coaching in the boat.
- Race review by any method is very popular.
- They appreciate a non-judgmental, non-condescending style.
- They swear they'll bring others from their fleet next year.
- They stand and cheer about the program at the awards banquet.
- They want to do the program at the home fleet.



# Create your own course:

- Any willing class veteran can create the course for a major regatta.
- Keep the material basic.
- Talk to the coaches and presenters ahead of time about style and message.
- Get a Greg Fisher, a respectful adult-to-adult teacher and plain-spoken master of the subject.
- Be flexible!



# Applicability

- The Coach course can be readily adapted to any class of boat.
- 3 day format can work
- A 5-7 day format allows enough shore and sailing time to cover the topics.
- Holding the course during a regatta legitimizes attendance and guarantees top sailors will attend.



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