



A Recipe for Foredeck

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Without fail, at the start of every sailing season, I suffer a total, overwhelming loss of any knowledge of foredeck I had the previous sailing season. This would not be so painful if it were not for the one singular fact that I have crewed on the foredeck of Ralph and Lindy Wuest's C&C 37 for the past several years and will again, God willing. With the number of times over the years I have done this position on this boat, I am embarrassed to confess that on the first Wednesday night race of each season I have absolutely no idea what I am doing.

Foredeck is what is nonchalantly referred to as 'the pointy end of the boat', which is both usually anatomically correct and easy for both sailors and non-sailors alike to comprehend but there is more to foredeck than the geometry of an isosceles triangle.

Disney inspires a well-known metaphor that aptly describes the difference in philosophical perspectives of the various positions on a race boat. The captain, tactician, and cockpit crew occupy 'Fantasyland' and the foredeck crew reside in 'Frontierland'. 'Fantasyland' is where any task is not only possible within timeframes measured in fractions of a nanosecond. 'Frontierland' is the great, unknown wilderness of any sailboat be it wood or plastic. Ropes freely roam that small space in a bewildering and chaotic anarchy that brings to mind the complexity of a vine enshrouded rainforest. The knot from Gorda pales in comparison to the pile

of spaghetti commonly found on foredeck. Time disappears. Sail changes, hoists, drops, and gibes consume vast quantities of time only apparent to those entangled in the Bermuda Triangle at the bow.

More than a handful of book chapters and articles have been written on the art of foredeck. Yet every boat is run differently. A racer-cruiser is not constructed like an America's Cup racer. No two racer-cruisers are exactly alike. Other things are done differently out of habit, preference, or to accommodate the physical limitations of the crew.

Before we proceed to Wuestwind's foredeck recipe, we will need a short glossary and the requisite disclaimers. Courtesy suggests the former and fear of litigation demands the latter.

First, the glossary:

- Everything on a sailboat has a name and some have more than one. A twing is also known as a barber hauler. 'Gibe' can also be spelled 'gybe' or 'jibe'. In case you are wondering, for reasons unknown to me, 'jib' cannot be spelled 'jyb'.
- Onboard we forego all formality and typically refer to every item of equipment, sail, or weather condition as 'it', e.g. 'let it go', 'trim it', 'don't touch it', 'it's a header', and the ever dreaded, infamous 'we're not going to make it'.
- The toe rail is a strip of metal that rims the circumference of the deck. It was named such because it is a useful place to plant one's toes to prevent sliding off the boat into the water, in which case it could justifiably be called a 'finger hold' rail. All the blocks for the running rigging for the spinnaker are attached to the toe rail.
- The end of the spinnaker pole that is not attached to the mast I have called the 'distal end' but it (there is that word again) can also be referred to as the 'fore end' or, simply 'the end' of the pole. This touches on another small controversy in the nautical lexicon and this is 'double-ended'. A boat with a rounded stern is often called 'double-ended' and some sticklers for exactitude counter 'Don't all boats have two ends, bow and stern?' Does not a spinnaker pole also have two ends? These are certainly questions best pondered during those coming seemingly interminable winter nights when insomnia and apathy ensue.
- This last piece of marine wisdom is courtesy of a leading member of our quarterdeck, Greg Wuest: "The spinnaker pole should not be confused with the boom even though it makes the same sound ('boom') when it strikes one's head during a gybe or hasty drop."

Next, the requisite disclaimers:

- The following instructions pertain to a racer-cruiser with a symmetric spinnaker using twin sheet and guy.
- The traditional leeward drop technique is described. The floating drop and windward drop are described elsewhere in the sailing literature.
- Since Wuestwind is a 37-footer, the dip pole method is used. Smaller boats commonly use the end-to-end method.
- The number of preferred foredeck crew for Wuestwind is three. With just two, a hand from the cockpit will be needed to help furl the leach of the jib when it is dropped. The third set of hands is especially helpful if there are white cap conditions (true wind speed about 13-15 mph). Regardless, another pair of eyes to double-check the ropes is always welcome.

Finally, the recipe for foredeck:

Set Up

- Attach blocks
- Spinnaker sheet block to toe rail of stern quarters.
- Spinnaker guy block to the toe rail fore of the cockpit but aft of the shrouds.
- Spinnaker sheet twings between the spinnaker guy block and shrouds.
- Down haul block to fore deck fitting just aft of the forestay.

Rig the ropes (assuming starboard rounding of windward mark)

- Run end with shackle of spinnaker guy through the block amidships, outside the lifelines, and attach to lifelines directly above spinnaker bag loops on the port side.
- Run end with shackle of spinnaker sheet, which is striped on Wuestwind, through stern block, outside the rail, through the twing (inside the lifelines), and attach to spinnaker guy just behind the forespar guy guard.
- Note that the sheets and guys are run outside the lifelines and the starboard sheet and guy are run outside the forestay.
- Unlike the sheet and guy, take the bitter end (not the end with the shackle) of the downhaul and run it through the downhaul block and the downhaul fairleads.

Rig spinnaker pole

- Attach mast end of pole to mast ring and raise the pole as required to rig the distal end of the pole.
- Open the jaws of the distal end of the pole and run both the starboard guy and sheet. Make sure your fingers are clear of the jaws when they close.
- Attach downhaul to distal end of pole.
- Place pole just to starboard of the forestay.

Rig jib sheets

- Tie a figure eight knot in the bitter end of each jib sheet.
- Note: figure eight or other stopping knots should not be applied to the spinnaker sheets or guys.
- Run the jib sheet through the sheave for the primary winch, through the jib fairlead, outside the shrouds, and over the spinnaker pole.
- Tie a square knot with the jib sheet from the other side.

Double check

- The spinnaker and jib halyards to make sure they run free.
- The guys and sheets 'from stem to stern'.
- Attach jib sheets to jib clews.

Prepare for Spinnaker Hoist

- Attach spinnaker bag shackles to portside toe rail.
- Red trimmed clew in the bag should point to the stern.
- Attach port guy to red clew in the bag.
- Attach starboard guy to green/blue tack in the bag.
- Attach spinnaker halyard to spinnaker head with enough slack so pressure from the jib will not pull out the spinnaker prematurely but not so much slack that the spinnaker halyard blows aft of the spreader.

Spinnaker Hoist

- Attach topping lift to spinnaker pole.
- The pole requires the cooperation of foredeck and the cockpit. Two foredeck crew handle the pole itself while the cockpit raises the topping lift.
- Note: bowperson must stay at the bow until the bow end is raised enough to be clear of the jib. If the distal end of the pole becomes entangled with the jib, at best the spinnaker will not be raised. At worst, the pole will tear a hole through the jib. One principle should be made clear to all crew: 'If the pole does not go up, the spinnaker does not go up.'
- Foredeck raises the mast end of the pole to the height designated by the red tape.
- Cockpit raises the topping lift until the pole is perpendicular to the mast.
- Helm calls the hoist as the boat rounds the windward mark.
- Bowperson jumps spinnaker halyard while foredeck crew 'A' unties or unzips the bag and foredeck crew 'B' tails the spinnaker halyard.
- Take down the jib: bow person furls jib luff; foredeck crew 'A' releases the jib halyard; and, foredeck crew 'B' furls jib leach.
- If breezy, tie jib to toe rail.
- Attach jib halyard to bow pulpit. If you return the jib halyard to the mast step, you will have to move it to the other side of the boat if the jib has to be moved.
- Foredeck cleats and coils the halyards.
- Retire to leeward.

Spinnaker Gybe

- Bow person goes to bow facing backwards towards the stern.
- Bow person grabs lazy guy in hand (with a handshake grip) that pole is to gybe to. If the pole is going from starboard to port, the lazy guy is in the right hand. If the pole is to going from port to starboard, the lazy guy is in the left hand.
- Helm calls the gybe around the leeward mark.
- Cockpit eases the spinnaker guy and sheet of one side and loads the other.
- Foredeck crew 'A' pulls the distal pole end jaw release from the mast end.
- While facing the stern, bow person guides the pole beneath the forestay; clears the old spinnaker guy and sheet; and loads the new guy and sheet; and shouts 'Made' to signal the cockpit to start trimming.

Spinnaker Drop

- If jib is to go up on the port rather than starboard tack:
- Bow person detaches and reattaches the jib tack around the downhaul so the pole will not foul the jib hoist.
- Bow person runs the jib head luff through the jib feeder.
- Foredeck person 'A' moves the jib sail from the port to starboard side of foredeck.
- Foredeck person 'B' detaches the jib sheets from the jib; ties a double figure eight; pulls the figure eight to the starboard side; and reattaches the jib sheets to the jib.

If jib does not have to be moved and goes up on starboard tack:

- Bow person jumps jib halyard.
- Foredeck crew tails jib halyard.
- Cockpit crew lowers topping lift so distal end of pole comes within reach of bow person.
- Bow person spikes the shackle of spinnaker tack.

- Note: With enough wind, the tension on the downhaul will pull the spinnaker pole rapidly down when the shoot is blown. The person on the bow should be certain her head is on one side of forestay and the pole on the other. Of course, this is easier said than done if the cockpit has failed to lower the topping lift adequately so the pole is not immediately above your head. This is one of the more risky maneuvers for anyone on the boat to perform. Treat it with due caution and respect. Failure to do so will significantly shorten your future sailing career.
- Foredeck crew 'A' lowers spinnaker halyard.
- Cockpit crew lowers topping lift until foredeck crew 'A' can release the topping lift fitting from the pole. This can be a daunting challenge since the cockpit crew assigned the topping lift is usually busy taking in the spinnaker. The topping lift winch and/or cockpit crew may be enveloped in a cloud of spinnaker cloth at this time. That said, it is incumbent upon foredeck to gently but persuasively remind cockpit that 'Pole must come down for boat to tack'. This may seem readily apparent to anyone but tradition must be respected. The cockpit must forget and delay. The foredeck must recall and encourage. I have been on a boat that tacked while the pole was still up and it was not a pretty sight. I will not divulge its name here in respect for its stalwart skipper and crew.
- Bow person and foredeck crew 'A' lower pole just starboard of forestay. Mast end of pole remains attached to mast.
- Return spinnaker bag to below decks for packing.
- Re-rig for next spinnaker hoist.

As with any recipe, customizing it and making it your own is the key to success. Good luck and with practice you too can learn to duck your head quickly when the need arises.

Questions and comments can be sent to: kro2@columbia.edu.

For further reading on spinnaker handling:

- Spinnaker Handling by Bent Aarre. © 1993 Sheridan House:
<http://www.sheridanhouse.com/catalog/sails/spinnaker.html>
- Sailing terminology: http://www.sailorpower.com/sp_definitions.htm
- Flying a Spinnaker with the Washington Yacht Club By Marlan Crosier, Second Edition, August 9th, 1997: <http://members.aol.com/marlanc/spin2.html>
- North U. Performance Racing Seminars: http://www.northu.com/About_Trim.htm