

# INDIA BOATING

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# YACHT RACING

Purist sailors probably prefer to race dinghies. The sheer excitement of being close to the water and to influence ultimate boat speed with your own athletic contribution is awesome. Others prefer heavier and more stable keelboats.

There is no doubt about it - top sailors believe that basic sailing instincts are best learnt in dinghies. Your sense of balance, the feeling for weather and wind cannot be more directly experienced than in an open dinghie.

Like dinghies, the smaller keelboats are usually open boats for a crew of 3 or 4. The main difference is the sense of balance. In a keelboat you are assisted with a keel and usually a chunk of lead at the bottom of the keel, which makes the boat stiffer and more difficult, indeed sometimes impossible to capsize. Nowadays most open keelboats are one-design classes which means the boats are identical. When racing these one-design keelboats the difference between winning and losing is the competence of the crew on the water and often off the water whilst preparing their boats for racing.

The next step from open keelboats is seagoing racing yachts. These are no longer open boats and have accommodation for overnight passages. Usually these yachts are not built under a one-design rule, but according to a rule that allows the yacht designers certain freedom to experiment with e.g. more sail area or deeper keels and differences in hull shape.

## Racing Handicap

Now you will ask how these yachts race if they are all different? Yes, just like in golf - with a handicap system.

Internationally there are a few institutions that supervise and modify these rules from time to time to allow for

technical and other developments. They issue what is called a rating or handicap for each individual yacht, which allows a fleet of different yachts to sail the same race or compete in international events. In a race, all yachts are timed and will get a lapsed time at the finish (is sailed time). The lapsed time is multiplied with the yacht's rating to get the corrected time. Corrected time in turn determines the relevant position of the yacht in the race. Needless to say that whatever rating system is observed, it always causes discussions among competitors after the race.





### Skills Required For Racing Yachts

Seagoing racing yachts bring a few interesting new dimensions to the game. The first one is the fact that the crews are bigger and therefore need to be managed as a team. In a small team it is relatively easy to learn the specific handling required for that particular crew position. Bigger crews need a better skill analysis before the jobs are assigned to specific crew.

Because usually the races are longer, even overnight, navigation is a vital element not only to compete but also to survive. Navigation is the art that determines primarily where you are, but it also is the ultimate tool that helps you find the right way on the race course relevant to the opposition, the wind and current /

tide if any. In other words it is your tool to determine your tactics or strategy to win. Today the GPS (Global Positioning System) has become an affordable navigational instrument that can be purchased off the shelf and which will provide you with a chartable position all the time. This makes the basic navigation of finding out where you are, easy. The tactical navigation is still a skill that requires experience and good knowledge of the waters in which you race.

Another skill needed on the bigger boats is the knowledge of sail trim. Usually bigger boats carry an inventory of sails to suit the wind and sea conditions of the moment. In longer races these can change frequently and knowing which sail optimizes boat

## RIDE THE WAVE

speed in different conditions may give you the winning edge.

Often neglected but a bare necessity is the food and beverage. Crews have to work hard to continuously change sail combinations to suit wind and weather and to keep the boat at optimum boat speeds around the clock. This translates in the need for food and beverage. You may imagine that knowing what your crew likes to eat and drink under these circumstances is a vital element to keep a high morale!

On longer races, reading the weather systems is a vital element for success. Good seamanship implies you do not wish to be surprised by bad weather. Rather,

who is responsible for the seaworthiness of his yacht and the well being of her crew.

Because racing yacht crews work as teams, a skipper is well advised to delegate his responsibilities to his crew. One person may become navigator or safety officer, another tactician or in charge of first aid. Someone needs to be sail master, radio operator and so on and so forth. It is often surprising how diversified the talents in a group of people are. The skipper has the task to recognize talents and skills quickly and to use these resources in the most efficient manner. Getting this right is not only the key to success; it is often the most rewarding element of offshore sailing.



Obviously there is a distinction between amateur and professional sailing. You have all heard about the America's Cup and the Volvo Ocean Race. Their crews are among the most talented in the sport and after distinguishing themselves from a young age they may turn professional and earn a living as a professional yachting. Whilst they impress us with their superlative sailing skills, most sailors are of the lesser Corinthian sort. Perhaps less flashy but still out there to enjoy their moments on the water.

One of the reasons that sailing is such an attraction is because for most of us sailing is not only a sport, it has become a lifestyle. You start in dinghies and gradually move up the ladder to the world of ocean sailing.

### Author Bart Kimman

is a yachtsman by passion. He grew up in a yachting environment and developed his sailing skills from a very young age. He sees the emerging yachting scene in Asia as a great challenge and is keen to assist the new boaters to get on the water!



you want to be prepared for it when it comes. This is a function of how well you can read the weather systems.

### Role Of A Skipper

In this context it is worth mentioning that in a sailboat race the ultimate responsibility to race or to continue to race lies with the skipper and not with the racing committee.

Safety on board is the responsibility of the skipper. Whilst there are guidelines for fitting out of racing yachts racing on the open sea, it is always the skipper

You yourself can choose the level of competition. From outright professional sailing to simple club racing in boats that are mostly syndicated to keep the cost down. And sailing is for men and women equally. Today happy crews are mostly mixed as women are as competent as men.

Perhaps the key to sailing and seamanship is to be independent of others. You and your crew fix any problems you meet under way. This independence is perhaps the core value of sailing and racing boats, in fleets around the world. Come and join! **IB**