

The Laser is a highly maneuverable boat that responds rapidly to her helm and changes in wind velocity. With her light weight and high performance characteristics, any errors in sail shape, sail trim, weight distribution, or helmsmanship are immediately evident as other boats rapidly pull away.

Roll tacking and roll jibing are two techniques that every racing dinghy sailor should master. While the techniques take a great deal of practice to perfect, once they are mastered the racing sailor will realize immediate results in faster, more controlled tacks and jibes.

Figure 7-13 shows the sequence for roll tacking the Laser. The same basic technique is also used successfully in the 420. When preparing to tack, trim the sheet in hard, ease the tiller to leeward, and hike to weather. Your after foot should be free of the hiking strap in preparation for moving to the other side. As the boat heads up, allow the boat to roll towards you. When the rail you are sitting on touches the water, the luff of the sail will become soft. Push the tiller all the way to leeward, push off against the side of the cockpit with your forward foot, and duck as you move across the boat. Immediately hook your new forward foot (former after foot) under the hiking strap. In light or medium winds be careful not to hike out too quickly; let the boat get going on her new tack. The tiller should now be behind your back. Transfer your grip on the tiller and sheet to the other hand behind your back as you sail off on the new tack. Hike quickly and hard if the wind is fresh. Roll tacking gives the boat an extra boost to weather as well as keeping the speed up. The sail should never actually luff; it should quickly snap over to the boat's opposite side.

Roll jibing begins with the Laser sailing on a dead run with the sail well out, the board about two-thirds of the way up, and the boat heeled to weather. The sailor in figure 7-15 is rolling the boat to weather as he pushes the helm to weather. As the boat rolls, the boom will lift slightly and the sheet should be jerked hard and the stern turned through the wind. Since the natural tendency of the boat is to round up to windward, the helmsman must steer the boat "down" (away from the wind) as he eases the sheet out on the new tack. The result is a course alteration in the shape of an "S". It is particularly important to get the boom up and jerk the sheet to prevent the sheet snagging on the transom. If this occurs the sail will be overtrimmed and the boat will

have a marked tendency to round up. In a breeze this can easily lead to a capsize. The position of the centerboard is also very important. If the board is all the way down, the boat can trip over the board and capsize. If the board is all the way up, the boat will be out of balance and lose directional stability during the jibe. The result is that it is difficult to steer the boat "down" at the completion of the jibe and again a capsize can result.

The following is a summary of helpful hints which will be useful when sailing the Laser.

Light winds

Helm—Make slow, very smooth alterations in course. Do not pinch the boat when beating to windward. Let her foot to keep the speed up. On a run bear off in a puff, head up in the lulls.

Weight—Keep weight well forward, but be careful not to bury the bow. Heel to leeward going to windward; heel to weather on the runs.

Sail Shape—Clew tie-down should be tight against the boom. Ease the outhaul and Cunningham to get maximum draft. Since mast bend is controlled by sheet tension and the vang rather than by stays and shrouds, the sheet should be trimmed in hard and the vang set up almost as tight as possible. Although this induces mast bend and tends to flatten the sail, it moves the draft aft. When going to weather the sheet should be eased slightly to allow the boat to foot. On a reach or run ease the vang slightly to ease the leech.

Traveler—Ease the traveler bridle a little to allow the boom to rise. Be careful not to allow excessive leech twist. Easing the traveler will also make the tiller action easier.

Centerboard—All the way down when going to weather. On a run get the board all the way up. Put it down about one-third just before a jibe.

Medium air

Helm—Respond quickly to wind shifts. Be careful not to overcorrect and jam the tiller over, as this will stall the rudder. Keep the boat pointing and sailing flat when going to windward. Once again, when on a run bear off in the puffs, head up in the lulls.

Weight—Keep your weight forward and hike to keep the boat flat. Heel the boat to weather on the runs. If marginal planing conditions exist, move your weight quickly forward when coming off a wave. Also, give the sail a few rapid trims. If the