

J[®] 44

Class Association

A NEWSLETTER FOR J/44 OWNERS AND FRIENDS
WINTER 2000

SAFETY LESSONS FROM THE SYDNEY-HOBART RACE

While the J/44 is a very sturdy boat, it would find the conditions met by the competitors in the last Sydney-Hobart race to be very challenging. There are some interesting conclusions arising from the inquiry conducted by the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, which will be of interest to the J/44's which go offshore.

First, one has to recognize that there are seas which will bring any small boat to the brink of disaster. Even boats with Stability Indices above 120deg were rolled by very high, breaking waves. Unlike the 1979 Fastnet race results, one cannot correlate rollover with varying degrees of stability. It simply depended on where the boat was located in the storm. However, there were several conclusions common to both races. Boats that continued to windward as the storm built and were actively sailed THROUGH the waves by skilled helmsmen, fared a good deal better than those who reversed course and reached back toward Sydney, thereby putting the wind and seas on their quarter. Many of the latter were overtaken by breaking seas, broached and rolled. Few of those continuing had this problem. Further, boats that resorted to passive storm tactics (heaving to, or lying ahull) were rolled more often than those sailing actively. There were not instances of a drogue being deployed while reaching, accordingly no conclusions can be drawn as to their effectiveness.

Strength of the boat remains a primary consideration in choosing a sea-boat. Tons of water will impact the hull in breaking seas, and the deckhouse and cockpit must be capable of withstanding that enormous pressure. Hatches and ports must be equally strong. Some of the newer boats seemed to have strong hulls, but had

decks that were not up to the impacts suffered.

One particularly interesting observation relates to our common practice of running halyard and other tails into the cabin through the main hatch slide. On one boat which had done this, when they rolled and the mast snapped, the halyards pulled the main hatch out of the boat, leaving it vulnerable to flooding and requiring abandonment of an otherwise sound hull.

The long-standing argument about the character of jacklines gained new data. Most people did NOT like the elasticity of the commonly-used flat nylon tapes, which put people over the side before they fetched up short on their tethers. The report suggests jacklines be made of kevlar or other non-stretch material; and not exposed to the sun except when racing. In the same system, a few tethers failed, and the CYCA will now require that harnesses (and tethers) be dated, kept in airtight containers in the boat to prevent deterioration, and replace when they are seven years old. There were also several cases of crewmen slipping out of harnesses which did not have crotch straps. You should consider having a sailmaker add crotch straps to your harnesses. In order to have the capability of double tethers, CYCA will require that additional tethers be carried for 30% of the crew. Tethers should have a snap shackle on the inboard end, which can be released under load (to prevent being underneath a capsized boat).

Inflatable PFD's worked fine, BUT the automatically inflating variety were inflated by the breaking seas, and were thereafter difficult to wear while working the boat. Crew should be prepared to disable the automatic function in very heavy conditions, AND to

1999 J/44 Class Race Results

1999	1999
AYC SPRING	LARCHMONT NOOD
1 Golddigger	1 Golddigger
2 Challenge IV	2 Challenge IV
3 Maxine	3 Mabuhay
4 Mabuhay II	4 Runaway
1999	1999
BLOCK ISLAND RACE	AYC FALL
1 Vamp	1 Maxine
2 Golddigger	2 Vamp
3 Resolute	3 Mabuhay
4 Runaway	4 Diogenes 2
1999	1999
BLOCK ISLAND RACE WEEK	MBFS
1 Golddigger	1 Challenge IV
2 Challenge IV	2 Vamp
3 Diogenes 2	3 Mabuhay
4 Maxine	4 Diogenes 2

SAFETY EQUIPMENT FLEET PURCHASE

In preparation for the upcoming Newport to Bermuda race the J/44 class association with the help of Yachtsoft.com is preparing a fleet purchase of safety equipment. The items under consideration are: SOS Inflatable life vests with built in harness's, SOS waist belt style life vests, jacklines and tethers, personal EPIRBs with radio direction finders and personal strobes. If you have other needs for safety equipment please contact Tom Castiglione for additional information. All J/44 owners will receive pricing information within two weeks of receiving this newsletter.

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