



OCEAN RACING CLUB OF VICTORIA

BOWMAN ESSENTIALS

CONQUERING THE POINTY END



Bowman’s Course


Welcome

Peter Dowdney



- Sailing career highlights:
- 2 x America’s Cups
 - 1 x Admiral’s Cup
 - 3 x Kenwood Cups
 - 16 X 52ft’s + 2 x M28’s
 - Numerous coastal and ocean races – B30, S30C
 - Match racing, E22’s, 114’s, 2 handed






Martin Vaughan

Sailing career highlights:

- 1 x Melbourne to Osaka DH
- 5 x Sydney to Hobart (2 as skipper)
- 4 x Melb to Hobart (2 DH, 2 as skipper)
- Numerous coastal and ocean races – SZSC, M20, M25, M2K1, M2AB, APL
- Numerous regattas – Hammo, Airley, Magnetic, Koh Samui, Kings Cup, Lincoln, Geelong, Southern Cross



1

Session 1.
An introduction to working the bow

2

Session 2.
Practical bow work on the racecourse

3

Session 3.
Practical bow work on the racecourse (continued)

4

Session 4.
Offshore Racing Session

Inshore

Offshore

Inshore bowman module

- **Learning Outcomes**
- By the end of the session participants will be able to:
 - ✓ Understand & describe the risks associated with working on the bow of racing yachts
 - ✓ Describe approaches & techniques for working the bow which reduce risk and maximise performance
 - ✓ Demonstrate an understanding of how to competently work on the bow of a modern racing yacht.

- **Course Objectives**
- To help develop & upskill the next generation of bowmen and women by passing on the basic skills, knowledge and tips learned from over 30 years on experience in this area.
- To help raise the standard of crew work (and bow work in particular) of club level yachts that may be looking to take the next step of entering their first ocean race or major regatta.
- To assist and encourage crew members to move into the bowman's role with a degree of confidence and understanding of what the role involves and why certain things are done.
- To provide boat owners with an avenue for training members of their crew so they do not have to rely purely on on-the-job training that involves lots of "trial and error" & experimentation.
- To provide a more formal explanation of how and why things are done on the bow.

Session No.1

An introduction to working the bow

- The role of the modern bowman/woman
- Attributes of a good bowman/woman
- What gear do I need?
- Preparation = success
- Developments in modern yacht design and how this has changed the role of the bowman/woman




Attributes of the modern bowman/woman

- The bowman is responsible for everything that happens in front of the mast
- Ensure all headsails and spinnakers go up and come down smoothly and efficiently
- Help the boat get a good start
- Direct input on close crosses, overlaps, distance calls, wind calls etc.
- Boat preparation and maintenance – especially relating to the mast and foredeck equipment
- Responsible for the packing and readiness of all headsails & spinnakers, spinnaker poles/spirits, mast, furlers, lifelines & lacing, take-down straps, snap shackles, running rigging and just about everything else you can think of!
- The bowman may not necessarily be the person that has to fix all these things but you are definitely responsible for making sure that this equipment is in good working order, is fit for purpose and ready to race.



At times life on the bow can be tough but when everything goes right, it is incredibly rewarding!

Attributes of a good bowman/woman



Knowledge of the task and of the boat

Understanding of the fundamentals of the job is critical but not all advice is good advice!

This course is designed to provide you with the how, what, when and why of the role.


Does the boat have a procedures manual that you can study?

Has the rest of the crew read it and do they follow the processes?

Get to know your boat and the gear that you will be using – starting out on the race track costs time and can lead to mistakes.

Understand the sail chart and where the crossover points are for each sail

Know what the next sail will be and where it is in the boat.



Good communications skills

- Communicate calmly & clearly – use verbal and physical signals
- Try not to raise your voice – it has a compounding effect on the noise level of the boat
- Starting line calls
- Bow calls
- Wind & wave calls
- Hand signals– keep it simple!
- "Made" calls on the gybe
- Post race review – what went well and what didn't go to script.
- Develop a culture of constant improvement
- Mistakes happen – seek clarity on the cause and decide on a solution for next time

Balance, strength, agility & fitness

- Working the bow is a physically demanding role
- Being well will make your job a lot easier
- Strength and endurance is needed in relation to moving sails around, climbing and simply holding on.
- Fatigue is a cumulative thing that is compounded when conditions are rough.
- Balance & agility - attributes that can be worked on and improved over time.
- Work out a fitness regimes that works for you
- Balance and core exercises help a lot



Have no fear of heights or aversion to getting wet - there is no avoiding going up the rig or getting saturated if you work the foredeck so you either embrace it or choose a different career!



Confidence in your own abilities

Good bowmen and women clearly understand their own capabilities


Having the confidence to make that critical call when it is needed and communicate this to the crew or afterguard - i.e., a late change of plans in a drop, breaking the line at start etc.

There is nothing more frustrating than an uncertain call coming back from the bow.

Good judgement in terms of time & distance - comes with experience and lots of practice!



What gear do I need to do the job?



Wet weather gear

- Good quality wet weather gear is essential.
- You need to stay warm and dry for as long as possible.
- Smock tops vs jackets
- Modern race boats are incredibly wet, and the water is hitting you with force
- Good gear costs but when it is wet and cold – you will pay anything for the right gear!




Climbing harnesses

- Climbing harnesses are considered to be part of a bowman's standard kit
- Used for going up the mast, climbing out to the end of the pole, or to fly out to clew of the spinnaker
- It is faster and safer to wear a climbing harness all the time
- More of a high level racing thing
- Harnesses have also become a safety device




Attaching your climbing harness

- Climbing harness vs Bosun's chair!
- Form fitting and secure
- Do I really need to wear one all the time?



Remember these 5 things when climbing

- 1) Inspect the condition of the halyards
- 2) Always tie the halyard to your harness
- 3) Attach your safety stop
- 4) Use lanyards on your equipment
- 5) Have someone you trust on the other end



Maybe not like this!

Footwear



Good quality sailing shoes are a must to provide positive grip on wet foredecks.

Boats are great for offshore sailing but they are a bit cumbersome for your average inshore race.

The new runner style shoes are excellent for comfort but the level of grip/traction that they provide does vary a lot between brands.

I have found that some of the cheaper brands actually give you the best grip but they will usually only last a couple of seasons.

Wear whatever provides you with the best balance of comfort and grip.



Starting Watches

- This is a critical piece of kit for any Bowman. You can't really do your job at the start without one so a decent starting watch should be one of your first investments if you plan to be a Bowman on an ongoing basis.
- There are lots of different options of starting watches available but make sure you get one that has the standard 5-minute starting sequence and a Sync function so you can sync to the next gun if you as slightly out on your timing.
- I don't recommend that you spend a fortune on a fancy Rolex for this job. This is a very physical role and watches cop a pounding so do not risk smashing the family heirloom.
- You can buy a very functional and effective starting watch for well under \$200.00.



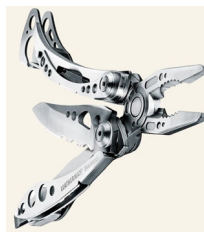
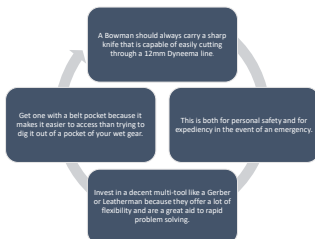
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FEATURES

- Operates RACE MODE Features including:
 - Multiple Start Sequence option - Watch during 5-15 Min. Timing (over 10)
 - RACE Mode feature - Watch/Reset if you start the count down only in race
 - Multi-line display - Start Sequence + Time
 - Loud audible count down and start beep signals
 - Count down repeat or count down and up options (for elapsed race time)
 - Separate fast reverse Race and Time mode switching
 - Water resistant to 5 ATM (50m / 150ft)
 - 500000 Features including:
 - Time, hours/minutes/seconds - 12 or 24hr format
 - Month/Day or Day/Month format
 - Daily alarm
 - Chronograph - including hours and time of the day
 - Luminous hands/face



Knife/Multi-tool





Spike + Tape & ties

Spike

- Required for firing snap shackles that are under load
- Attach to harness via shock cord lanyard
- Don't use it all that often but essential when you do need it!


Tape & ties

- Always carry a roll of electrical tape in your pocket.
- There are lots of things that it is useful for and you cannot go darning down below whenever you need some in a race.
- I also carry a sail tie in my pocket as well because you never know when you are going to need one.



larry stock photo

Helmet



Helmetts are becoming more common within the sailing community, especially on some of the more radical designs that tend to crash and burn a lot.

In the context of this course, I am mainly advocating the use of helmetts when you have to go aloft while racing or when in any sort of challenging sea state.

Some bowmen on bigger boats choose to wear helmetts as part of their regular kit but don't see it as being critical on your average offshore yacht.

Personal safety gear


- Lifejacket#1/Harness with whistle
 - Cat3 must wear at night
 - In service
- Tether (ideally 3 point)
- Strobe
- PLB (Cat 2+ but we recommend)

Plus extra stuff you may consider:


- Torch (waterproof, maybe a head torch)
- Pocket knife



Preparation & routines = Success




Foredeck equipment



- Check you gear regularly
- Condition of lacing on lifelines
- Tape everything
- Hatch locks
- Attachment points for sail bags
- Mast tracks & cars - position on mast for the dip po
- Marks on halyards and topping lift
- Tack line clips – fit the spin rings and eyes.
- Condition of the safety lines that run from bow rails to the pole end
- Spinnaker trip lines (Martin breaker lines) - how they function & what they clip to

Headsails



- Confirm sail list for the day
- All headsails are race packed
- Packed correctly
- Batten tension
- Check luff tapes
- Lubricate clips or hanks
- Check functionality of bag clips and zippers
- Bags are clearly labeled
- Sail ties around luff of sails
- Pack sails in appropriate sequence & locations for conditions

Spinnakers & gear

- Spinnakers are packed and "race ready".
- Banding or wooling of chutes
- Furling sails – race ready
- Furlers - check the condition of the thimbles, pins, and furler lines
- Make sure the bags are clearly marked and all clips are functioning properly
- Stack boat - note of the location of each sail
- Don't assume that someone else has done these checks



Mast & boom

- Check all halyards
- Are halyards crossed inside the mast?
- Standing rigging tension - adjust with Rigging screws or mast jack?
- Visual inspection of the rig
- If anything looks wrong go up and fix it while you are still in the pen.
- Conduct a full rig check before you sail a boat for the first time
- Rig checks - part of your regular maintenance routine
- Visual inspections aren't foolproof, but they will help to identify obvious issues
- Check gooseneck and vang attachment points





SHORT BREAK (10mins)



Developments in modern yacht design

How this has changed the role of the bowman/woman?



Different types of boats – IOR to IMS to IRC

Masthead rigs vs Fractional rigs

Symmetrical vs Asymmetrical spinnaker boats & those with both


Advances in sail design and materials used in sails – how does this impact the bowman's job?

Headsail attachment – twin foils, hanks, furling, free flying staysails - pro's/cons

General discussion on how these developments have changed the role of the bowman

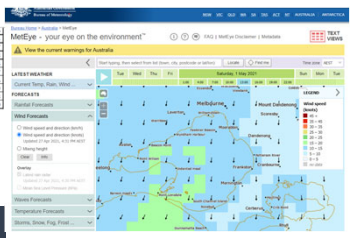
How have these developments changed the role of the bowman/woman?

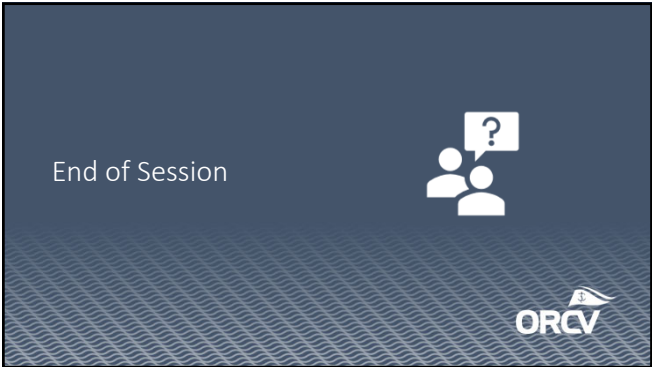
Group Discussion



Hypothetical race day preparations for the bowman...

How would you prepare for the day ahead?







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