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High School Sailing Drills

Below are drills I use based on number of boats to keep practices fun and efficient:

Two Boats:

- Boat handling and speed
- Match race/drills
- Covering drills for team racing

Three Boats:

- Boat handling and speed
- Mark traps, pass backs
- Two on one covering
- High lows, pig in middle
- Fleet racing
- Two match racing while you work one on one with a boat in need

Four Boats:

- Boat handling and speed
- Two on two team racing
- Match racing
- Balancing drills
- Fleet racing

Five Boats:

- Boat handling and speed
- Pig in middle with two match racing
- Mark traps and pass backs with two match racing
- Fleet racing

Six Boats:

- Boat handling and speed
- Three on three team racing
- Two on two teams with two match racing
- Two groups of pig in the middle
- Two groups of mark traps and pass backs
- Team racing combo drills
- Fleet racing

More than Six Boats:

-Mix and match all of the above or simply fleet race

Drill Descriptions:

Up Down Drill:

Start with a "Rabbit" rounding the coach boat, or a mark, then the fleet ducks the rabbit one by one. Rabbit tacks once everyone has ducked.

Upwind Whistles:

One whistle = Tack

Two whistles = Stop, or get real slow (then one whistle starts a 10 second countdown)

Three Whistles = 720

The down starts with the group following me in the coach boat then I blow the whistle once to have them bear away to a deep reach

Downwind Whistles:

One whistle = Gybe

Two whistles = Transition from reach to wing or wing to reach

Three Whistles = 720

Accelerations:

Rolling accelerations at a mark. Set a mark for each boat. Do rolling two minute or rolling one minute starts. Goal is to be near the mark full speed at the gun.

Starting Practice:

Rolling or non rolling two or three minute starts for the entire group.

Raise Hand on the Line Drill:

Sail through the middle of the line full speed close hauled, crew raises their hand when think they're on the line. Tack, sail above boat and loop around to do it again, crew does it twice, then skipper twice. Coach calls how far under or over they are.

Pig in the Middle:

Start at pin end of starting line, sail around Digital-N, the leader is always trying to pass up the third boat, their teammate, until that teammate is now the new leader. Now the new one tries to pass up the new three until they are winning. It's a continuous drill around the Digital-N. And that parts needs explaining so everyone is clear. Use the marks for mark traps when you approach, work together and reset if it becomes a drag race with no one clearly in 123, which often happens.

Team Racing Combo Drills:

Start at the top reach of Digital-N, (or pin end) drill starts AFTER you bear away around mark two, or round the pin. Race to finish, repeat again at top reach.

Two on Two Team Racing:

Race with four boats, the team with last place loses, creates lots of action.

Covering Drills:

5-6 Drill: Start at pin end, sail around Digital-N, 5 hammers 6, pretending to be the 5 in a 1-4-5. 6 tries to push and pass. If 6 passes, they switch rolls.

Covering Drill: Very similar to 5-6 except there is no slowing. Leader loose covers 6 and practices staying ahead.

Balancing Drill:

This is a bit hard to start correctly but valuable. Two pairs of boats round the bottom marks of the digital N as if they were gates in fleet racing, from inside to out, the leaders are on the same team and round at the same time, the trailers are on the same team as well, then the leaders balance up the beat and try to finish at the EXACT same time in the 1-2 combo. 3,4 try to pass and win the race as if it were in a two on two team race, or at least break up the 1-2.

High Low Drill:

Three boats bear away around mark 2. Boats two and three are on the same team trying to pass boat one. The second boat sails high of the one trying to steal their breeze or make them sail extra distance. The third boat sails deep trying to move into first place.

Mark Trap Drills:

Windward Mark: A group of three work together at the top two marks 1 and 2. They approach the weather mark and do a windward mark trap on starboard lay, then another at the offset mark 2, then quickly jibe around just above windward mark starboard layline and repeat.

Leeward Mark: You can set a small mark as a starting point 20 yards above mark 3. The group bears away around it to set up the drill. They do a mark trap at mark 3. They can also try to pass up the three on the bottom reach and start the second beat. After sailing briefly upwind they stop, head over to the "starting mark" and repeat.

Lead/Chase Drill:

Two boats sail on port along the starting line, one trailing the other, and they *give themselves* two minutes. Match race start is on but the first boat keeps broad reaching and determines when to head back. When the leader heads back the trailing boat decides to lead or follow based on time and the match race action begins.

Hope this helps and good luck!

Let me know if you have any other cool drills please!

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