

# A Beginners Guide to Racing at Gurnard Sailing Club

This guide gives brief details of the main points of concern for sailors new to racing at Gurnard, aimed especially at those not experienced in racing elsewhere.

## **Before going afloat.**

### **Check your start time and class flag.**

A list of start times is on the outside notice board, which is on the wall to the right of the main door into the club.

The Slow Handicap is for all boats with a handicap number (P.Y. number) higher than 1170, which includes Picos, Mirrors, Toppers, Fevas and Laser 4.7s.

The letter of the flag used for your start is also on this board, this will be flown from the club flagpole above the race box 10 minutes before your start.

You may find it easier to learn the starting order of the classes, and watch them starting, rather than looking at the flags to find out how long to your start.

Try and set your watch on a gun for one of the early class starts, before you leave the shore. (Its just one less thing to do afloat!) Normally all the starts are 5 minutes apart.

### **Do you have a course card?**

This is a map of the buoys used for club racing and the letter or sign used for each one. They can be bought from the race box (£1) and stuck on to the boat, usually on the foredeck.

### **Check where the Start line is**

The club start line is from the black and white chequered board on the front of the clubhouse (above the entrance to the changing rooms), through the movable orange pole on the sea wall railings. The outside end of the line is marked by one of 3 buoys. These are a large orange racing mark, a flat yellow mark, or a small orange buoy with a black diamond and a pole.

To check where the start line is before each race, stand under the chequered board and see which of the 3 buoys lines up with the orange post.

### **Check your equipment**

Is the boat rigged properly, and **is the bung in?**

Are you wearing suitable clothing (wetsuit, spray top, etc) for the conditions, and a watch for timing the start.

Everyone racing must wear a buoyancy aid.

### **Do you have a basic tidal strategy?**

Make sure you understand what the tide is going to do during the race, so that you know when to stay in shallow water, out of the worst of the tide (usually when it is against you), and when to go into the deeper water to be in the faster tide (when the tide is with you)

If you are unsure, ask someone or try to follow what the leading boats in your class are doing.

In Gurnard Bay the tide flows to the west (out) from about 2 hours before High Water Cowes (HW) until 4 hours after HW, and to the east (in) from about 4 hours after HW until 2 hours before HW. The time of HW is on the sailing calendar or tide table booklet.

### **How much water is there over the rocks?**

At low tide, the area along the shore is covered with rocks, but when the tide is halfway in, there is enough water over them to be able to sail to within 20 metres of the shore. The block of concrete with a triangle on a post at the bottom of Shore road is a good guide. If the water is less than 15cm below the top of the concrete block then there is enough water over the rocks for all the slow handicap boats.

### **Before the start**

You **must** be on the water 5 minutes before your start to be counted in the results, but you should aim to be on the water and sailing by about 10 minutes before your start, to give you enough time to settle down before getting your course.

### **How do I find out my course?**

The course for your class will be shown about 4 minutes before your start, just after the previous class has started.

The course is shown on a board on the clubhouse, by the flagpole. Red symbols mean you must leave the buoy to port (go round it anticlockwise), and white symbols on a green background mean you must leave the buoy to starboard (go round it clockwise).

The number of laps is shown after the course, as a number of dots. 2, 3 or 4 dots meaning 2, 3, or 4 laps are to be sailed.

**At the end of every lap you must sail across the finish line** between the chequered board and the flat yellow buoy. **The finish line is not usually the same as the start line.**

In the last 5 minutes before your start you need to read the course, so don't be too far away from the line, especially if the wind and tide are against you. It is very easy to drift away and not be able to get back to the start line for your start. If you are 4 minutes sailing away from the start line with 2 minutes to go to the start you will be late for the start! But remember that it is also important not to be over the line at the start, or you will have to go back and re-cross it.

### **After the start**

Concentrate on sailing the boat well using your tidal strategy, especially when beating.

The most common mistake when beating against the tide is not to keep close enough to the shore, so that too much time is spent in the fast adverse tide (tide against you) going nowhere, or worse still, backwards. Staying close to the shore means more tacking, but the more you do the better you become!

Make sure you sail the right course and go through the Finish line at the end of every lap.

### **After the finish**

If you have finished the race, reward your self with a ice cream or drink, then ask the people who beat you for advice on how you could do better next time.

When you have packed your boat up, have a look at the results, which are at the top of the stairs in the clubhouse. If you don't understand the handicap system ask another sailor to explain it to you.

**Remember that the winner of the race almost certainly made over 100 mistakes during the race, but they were just smaller than yours!**