

# Acton Action

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## Tacking the Jib; How You Doin'?

How much of the time during a tack is your jib flapping in the breeze? Is that a good thing? Not really. If you handle a jib on a boat, we have some tips for Y's, Hobies and Capris on how to do that efficiently and quickly so you don't luff up.

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## Devil's Lake Starts Revisited

When things were going well at Devil's Lake, it was usually because of a good start. We review our starts at that regatta and make the case for good finishes being the result of a good start. Then, on page 6, we ask Jerry Callahan to weigh in on the subject.

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## What the Heck is the Biophilia Effect? Is it happening to me?

It could be. We begin our series of visits with Florence Williams and her book *The Nature Fix* in this issue.

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What are these people up to in Michigan? Check out the HSA Facebook page to learn more:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/134414763295823/>

## OktoberFast!

Road warriors return home as the final few weeks of racing approach. This Sunday is the last in the Fall Series for all fleets. On October 15th is the first annual Round the Lake Race, a new event on our calendar. The penultimate weekend on Sept. 30-Oct.1 is OktoberFast, a Sunfish Midwest Regional Championship. The club is gearing up to host this regatta. More inside.

## Hueston Sailing Association



Upper left, Joe Fulford shows Y's stability as Brett Hart brings his craft in on Sunday. Upper right, junior Megan DeArmon tunes up in her Sunfish, perhaps hoping to get top junior at next week's OktoberFast Sunfish Regatta?

At right, Don Fecher plies his craft through the placid water Sunday looking for a puff of air.

Photos this issue by Joseph Fulford of Oakwood Studios





At left, the Y's head out on the course in light air last Sunday just after the start. That's Brett Hart and crew Joe Fulford on the left at position 1, Roger and Bobbie in the middle at 2, and Pete and Rose at position 3. This was the order of finish, right? Good start!

At right is Jerry Brewster out in his Sunfish last Sunday getting ready for OktoberFast and looking a lot like Dan Norton who also likes to stand up in his boat. (Except for the no shirt thing; Dan always wears a shirt) (Jerry?)



## "Starting strategy? We don't need no stinkin' starting strategy." (Oh yes you do!)

If you ask Lake St. Mary's Tom Katterheinrich what his best start at the Devil's Lake Sunfish Regional last weekend, he will likely say the one where he finished second. The start? Pretty darn good! A port tacker that caught the rest of the fleet off guard. As far as we know it was the only port tack start of the regatta. He got out in front and stayed there. Ok, one boat caught him.

If you ask Laura Beebe or Yours Truly about their best finishes, you'll get the same answer: our best finishes were a direct result of good starts. Both of us had one start in which we came down the line on port tack just down from the pin and tacked on top of the fleet. We were the boat farthest to leeward along the line. Both of us had no one below us, and we were able to drive off for speed and hit the line moving well. Both of us had our best races.

In our other "good" finish, we didn't share the same strategy. Laura was in the middle of the line on starboard and somehow punched out of that traffic to get into clear air. It kept her in the top third of the fleet. In my other respectable finish, another 4th on Sunday, I port tacked into a big hole in the middle of the line about 15 seconds before the gun. With space to drive off, I was moving at max speed at the gun and got out there with the Nortons and the Chapmans who always seem to be out there. There is a reason for that. Both are really good at starting.

After the second race on Sunday in which super sailor Dan Norton finished 5th, I asked him how good his start was. "Not very good." That fifth place went with a first and a second in the three races that day, so his start was probably better than most but he was not happy with it. I didn't ask him the day before when he had two 8th place finishes. I'm betting the starts there weren't very good either.

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Charlie DeArmon manned the safety/crash/rescue boat last week and had to watch his Y-Flyer peers race without him as he did his race chair duties.

## OktoberFast!

HSA's first foray into hosting a regional championship in ten years is about to happen. On Saturday, September 30, and Sunday, October 1, there will be Sunfish aplenty as many of the club's Sunfish sailors and several guests compete in this two day event.

Participants can pre-register but can also register on the day of the event, beginning at 9:00 am on that Saturday. Lunch follows and then the Skipper's Meeting is at 11:30.

Jerry Callahan is principal race officer (PRO) for the regatta ably assisted by Pete Peters, Brett Hart, Bobbie Bode and John Shipley and Brian Callahan.

Dinner Saturday night will be in the Hueston Room as will all activities, including breakfast and lunches. Awards will follow lunch and racing on Sunday.

The top three finishers qualify for the Sunfish World Championships to be held next fall in Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina as do the top three qualifiers from every regional championship across the country.

At the Devil's Lake Regional in Michigan last weekend, which was attended by HSA's Laura Beebe and Yours Truly (See HSA's Facebook page for photos and story), was won by Rich Chapman from Chicago's Lake Bluff Sailing Club. Mark Kestral of Wisconsin finished second and Dan Norton of home club Devil's Lake Yacht Club was third.

Laura and I along with Dan Norton did finish second in the Saturday night Spinnaker Pole Drinking Contest. (Not much drinking.) (No - really.)

## Light Air Weekend Again

With the wind alternately dying and then asthmatic, HSA went to the line anyway last Sunday for the next to last in the Fall Series. In Hobies, Don Fecher won the first race but the wind petered out for race 2 and the racing fell apart. Ryan Servizzi left after the one slow start.

In Y-Flyers, with Yours Truly in Michigan and Charlie D. on committee, it was left to the remaining three Y's to compete. Brett Hart enlisted Joe Fulford (an ex-Navy enlistee) to crew for him and they went up against veterans Peters/Schultz and Henthorn/Bode. Brett continued up his learning curve while the other two swapped finishes, each taking one race.

In the Handicap start, Megan DeArmon port tacked her opponent Jerry Brewster in both races and led the windward leg, but the wily Brewster caught her both races (probably by distracting her with conversation) and got the wins. (See HSA's Facebook page for some video of this race). It was tight match racing. "I certainly felt the heat of Megan's breath on my neck," Jerry said. "So much so that I took a dip in the surprisingly warm lake afterwards." (See photo) Winds were reportedly 5-7 mph but likely less. Boats were in by 3:00



Is that a head in a boat? No, it's just Jerry over the side cooling it.

## Oh Yes You Do! (continued from page 3 )

We have all heard people say that where you start is where you finish. That is mostly true, particularly if you are in a race where the other skippers are pretty good. Start in the second row or be late to the line and you will likely finish behind those who were on the line and moving fast at the gun.

The key word there is "moving". You can be on the line but if you are unable to get acceleration off the line, you could be in for a long race. In race 2 on Sunday, I was on the line but squeezed by the boats around me. They accelerated both above and below me while I slowed down. Knowing when to shift gears is a big part of that. I shifted into neutral.

In race 2 on Saturday, I was over early and had to restart - a distinct disadvantage. Fortunately, I was able to do that quickly but ended up way back at the end.

Laura's worst start? Her second use of a "dip start" in which she sails above the line and then "dips" below starting line into a hole and comes up fast for the gun. She tried this in race 3 on Sunday after a general recall, the only general recall for the Sunfish fleet. The problem was that the "I" flag was flying after the recall and she had no idea what it meant. The flag, a yellow one with a black dot, is the **Round the End rule 30** flag that means no boat may be on the course side of the line one minute before a start. You have to go back and round either end of the line, pin or boat, before you can start again.

Laura heard the race chair say, "Laura, you can't start like that. You have to come back around the committee boat." Not really understanding what he meant, she jibed and sailed back below the committee boat and then tacked and started. Technically, not what the rule says in order to clear yourself, but no one called her on it. She actually recovered pretty well considering, ending up 10th.

In the last race Sunday, I actually liked my start although I ended up with my worst finish. I started at the boat end, the last boat trying to get to windward of everybody. That means I waited a bit until there was space to squeeze in between the boat and the others who had been parked there. It worked. I was only a couple of seconds behind the gun but I had clear air and was on the right tack. I wasted it. After a minute of sailing in the bad air of the boat just ahead and to leeward, I tacked to port instead of staying on starboard to the left side, the one where the most pressure was. I should have tacked back after clearing my air but didn't. Instead I continued out to the right side where the better wind wasn't.

That wasn't the only problem. I waited until the last race of the regatta to hit a mark and another boat. The resulting three circles in the water were, uh, slow.

We will likely have 12-14 boats from our club in OktoberFast and another 6-8 boats (or more) from other clubs. For us, that's a big fleet start. This coming Sunday will be a good chance to practice starts. Laura and I both agree that in club racing, few of us really work on getting off the line well, mostly because it is a club race where the line is relatively long and the number of boats few. Plus mostly we try to avoid conflict and tension in club races, preferring to just go off the line cleanly and let the windward leg decide things. OktoberFast will present a different set of conditions.

To help you prepare we offer up a review of some familiar starting options in next week's issue of the *Acton Action*.



## Good Starts Mean Good Finishes (Usually)

*Jerry Callahan is a former national champion in Y-Flyers. Three times. We won't even attempt to list all his other successes in racing, but they are numerous. Here, Jerry offers a few tips on that all important feature: getting a good start.*

### Starting, How Critical!

Where you start and how you start will determine your finish in nearly every race. Your position at the first mark is highly dependent on your start.

For beginners, the hardest part of starting is being in the front line of boats. In large fleets, there are two or three rows of boats on the start line. To get in that front line you have to sail along the line or in front of the line and/or its extensions. (Be aware there may be restrictions on being in front of the line during the last minute.)

Starting at the favored end of the line is also critical. I usually sail head to wind in the middle of the line. My bow will point to the favored end. Only one or two boats will get that best start. Hopefully you're one of them. The next best place to start is down the line a bit or right behind those first boats. If you start on starboard near the RC boat it also allows you to tack to port if desirable.

If the line is square to the wind, any place will suffice. Sometimes I will practice starting on one end hoping someone will be trying the other end at the same time – a buddy perhaps. Which ever boat passes ahead says that end is favored. Then go to the other end and try it again to confirm it. All that takes time so get out to the starting area early. Sailing partially up the first leg also helps determine any wind shifts.

If the pin end of the line is favored it will make a tack to port inevitable. You're now dependent on all the boats behind and to windward of you tacking. (Usually they will.) Tack a quickly as you can.

In light winds, stay close to the line. You may not get back to the line in time for the start. In heavier air, that is not so critical.



Jerry Callahan , HSA Junior Camp Director and sailing mentor, has retired from racing Y's and Sunfish but he stays active in the club and races Soling One remote control sailboats when not at HSA helping out.



That's Leigh Ann Fulford at the wheel of the race committee boat last weekend. Husband Joe was on Brett Hart's Y-Flyer crewing while Leigh Ann helped out with duties on the boat.

# Tack! But Watch that Jib Please

*One of the things that often bothers a skipper is the way the jib gets handled on the tacks by his or her crew. It takes some training and practice to do it well and can make a difference in a race. New sailors often just let the jib release as soon as the skipper starts the tack. But, as we find out in this excerpt from Sailing World magazine, there is a better way.*

**backwind:** to set a sail so that the wind is on what would ordinarily be the lee side, as for turning the bow of a boat away from the wind..

**grinding:** (1) the act of turning the handle of a winch to pull in a sail; (2) dirty dancing

**tailing:** (1) the act of pulling on the line that is wrapped around the winch; (2) to follow someone, which is a bit creepy

The common element that connects all good racing maneuvers is spending as much time as possible at full speed. In many competitive classes, all of the good boats can sail close to their potential much of the time. One place where boats can pick up time is in the turns. Because they seem simple, tacks are often overlooked in favor of sets, jibes, and douses. However, the average race boat will do more tacks than any of those other maneuvers during an average race, often by a factor of two or more. Improving your tacks by 2 or 3 seconds can save you 30 or 40 seconds around the racecourse, and in a tight one-design or handicap fleet, that much time can be the difference between finishing in the top three or the bottom three. Releasing the jib may seem the easiest part of a tack. However, just because it doesn't require the same strength as grinding or tailing (see above) doesn't mean it should be dismissed. The release is one of the most important parts of the tack. A good release makes the rest of the mechanics of the tack easier, from tailing and grinding to turning the boat. When a tack doesn't go well, one of the first places to look is the release.

One of the biggest ways to make tacks faster is by minimizing the flapping of the sail, which creates a tremendous amount of drag. An early release, which allows the clew to move away from the centerline and the sail to flap as the bow passes through the wind, is very slow. Holding the release to get the correct amount of backwind in the headsail is the way to a good tack. A proper back allows the sail to blow smoothly through the fore triangle, which makes it easier to trim on the new tack. It will also help the helmsman steer through the tack efficiently, and allow them to quickly find the correct exit angle on the new tack. The ideal tack is one during which the sail never actually flaps, it just goes from full on the old tack to full on the new tack. It may sound difficult, but it can be achieved with proper timing and technique.

*According to Joe Buchert, a catamaran skipper at HSA, it's a little different for cats. "Our boat (a Nacra F-16) has a self tacking jib so there is typically no adjustments made during a tack. The Hobies should be doing very little backwinding. The jib should fill on the new side of the sail and then be brought over. Backwinding it is like putting on the brakes. With good speed going into the tack, proper tiller technique, and four hands on the boat, there shouldn't be a need for backwinding."*

## Life on Planet Earth and the Biophilia Effect; Are You Getting Enough Connection with Nature?

The idea of biophilia isn't new, having been around since perhaps Aristotle. It isn't however, until the last decade or so that an interest in the idea has been rekindled.

What is biophilia? Literally, the love of life or living systems. We have an innate connection with the natural world that makes us seek connection with other life forms and with nature as a whole. This connection makes us happier and healthier, if we bother to make it.

And if we don't? It could mean stress, unhappiness, and poor health according to Florence Williams who has authored *The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative*.

Her book is a country by country journey to find out what others are finding out about the positive effects of being outdoors. The biophilia hypothesis, she says "posits that peaceful or nurturing elements of nature helped us regain equanimity, cognitive clarity, empathy and hope. When love, laughter and music weren't around, there was always a sunset."

There has been a renewed interest in the brains-on-nature effect, largely due to the increases in obesity, depression, anxiety, and

the growing concern with our increasing alienation from the outdoors.

Although there has been a spike in the number of people visiting national parks in the past few years, there was significantly more in 1995 than there is today (21 visits per 100 people vs. 25 then).

The downward trend in being outdoors coincides with a shift in demographics. Homo sapiens officially became an urban species sometime in 2008. That's when the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that for the first time more people in the world lived in urban areas than rural ones.

We are in the middle of the largest mass migration in modern times, according to the WHO. The question is will cities devote enough planning and resources to make those urban spaces meet our psychological needs. How well are we adapting from the world we evolved in to the world we now live in.

If just a walk in a forest can deliver reductions in cortisol levels, blood pressure, and heart rate, maybe we should be coming to Hueston Woods more often. We'll hear more from Florence Williams in issues to come.



That's cat sailor Ryan Servizzi's Hobie Odyssey Tandem Kayak for sale on Craigslist. \$425 OBO. Hasn't been used in a few years. [rjservizzi@gmail.com](mailto:rjservizzi@gmail.com) or 513-787-8323

Also for sale/sail? Robert Meador's beautiful little 1963 Mac Dinghy. Completely restored in 2016 with layers of fiberglass cloth with epoxy all around, this little classic has original sails, new rigging, reconditioned trailer and electric trolling motor. \$1600 [w.r.meador@gmail.com](mailto:w.r.meador@gmail.com) or 513-373-6013