

# Acton Action



Y-Flyers carefully maneuver around a date stamp on the water and jockey for position on the starting line as Sunday's racing gets going.

## The Nature Fix: The Case for Getting Outdoors - Part 2

Being in Nature can make us feel better, live healthy, but what about its effect on the brain?

It is a good question. Here's another: Is the explosion of attractive technologies that give our brains social interactions negatively impacting us, and is our cure to go back to an environment that our brain resonates with?

That is one of the questions that Florence Williams, author of *The Nature Fix*, wants answered and the reason she went on a hike with cognitive psychologist David Strayer in the desert near Moab, Utah. Strayer has, among other things, testified in

Congress about the dangers of cell phone use.

Strayer is skeptical about the restorative effects of nature. Is it just being away from daily cares or is it something else, something you can't get from other diverting and pleasant experiences like music or visits to a museum? His research will answer that.

But he did once lead a group of scientists on a five day river trip to show his colleagues what happens to creativity when you take off your watch, turn off your devices, and head out into the wild.

What's this? Find out inside.



What he found was a 50% improvement in creativity after just a few days in nature. He used a Remote Associates Test (RAT) which gives you three words and asks you to come up with a word that links them.

Wanna try?

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## Sunday's Surprise Guest!

That would be the wind. Foretold to be about 4mph, it delighted those in attendance by showing up in a party clothes and high heels and proceeding to whoop it up on the water.

At top, left four of the five Sunfish eye the mark rounding in close proximity to one another; top right, it was all Y's and 'Fish in this corner of the lake; At left Diane Pierok sits out her committee duty, probably not imagining what was going to happen soon. More pg. 6

It was such a meager forecast - 4 mph. So meager and so evident in the rigging area at noon that the speed machines (Hobies) decided it would be more fun to go home and watch the Bengals lose again. Or in the case of Ryan and Kelsey Servizzi, to go out on paddleboards.

No sooner had the remaining wind warriors ventured out on the lake than the wind decided to kick up her heels. And heel we did.

By race time the breeze was showing signs not only of some pretty darn good gusts but filling in all over the lake. Elation followed. Finishing last didn't hurt so much. The wind was blowing and sailors were sailing. No one

had to say, "A bad day at the lake is better than..." You know the rest. It was simply marvelous out there.

Y-Flyers Pete Peters and Rose Schultz sloughed off the competition and made an even stronger claim on invincibility by first teasing then trouncing the others.

Phil Robertson just happened to be at the lake for other reasons than sailing and got picked up as crew for Yours Truly. In race 2, Diane Pierok was enlisted in his place after being roused from her somewhat leisurely committee commitment.

Just 50 yards from the finish line, her skipper

unceremoniously dumped his boat and crew and everything dry was wet. Mud followed.

In the Handicap start, it was all Sunfish with the Capri skippers all on committee duty. Ken Wright, Dominiek Everaet, Megan DeArmon, Kayla Draper, and the Blue and Yellow Swan Laura Beebe all used Sunday to get ready for next weekend's super Sunfish spectacular - OktoberFast.

The Laura won both races but there was a good showing from junior Kayla Draper in race one and Ken Wright in race 2. Everyone pronounced themselves fit and ready for the contest coming up this weekend. HSA's finest will enter the arena.

# Let's Talk Starts - Four Common Approaches

Before we begin, ask yourself: "Have I been happy with where I am at the start?" Better yet, ask yourself, "Do I even have a strategy?" With that in mind, here are four common starting strategies you might use the next time out, like this weekend at **OktoberFast**.

There are more than four strategies but we are going to stick to some of the most often used. Some racers are content to stay out of other people's way and just get out on the course without fouling anyone, even if it means starting late. But that may just be the recipe for finishing too often out of the money. And by "out of the money" we mean out of reach of the top contenders by the time the final few legs of the race are at hand.

Keep in mind too that there are many other variables to consider in choosing a start that we won't even mention here, like whether or not the wind is light, what end of the line is favored, what side of the course you want to be headed for, and what the wind might be doing when you get to the line. It's never simple, but we will try to keep this simple. You gotta start somewhere. (Pun intended)

The first start strategy we'll mention is by far the most common: the Reach In/Reach Out strategy. This is probably the one we use at our club the most.

In this start, you keep your boat moving fast by reaching up and down below the line and timing your approach so that you hit the line at full speed close hauled at the gun near the spot you have chosen. That means finding or maintaining a position or a hole to pull up into at about five to ten seconds before the gun and keeping the boat moving at near top speed.

You need to have an idea of where on the line you want to be when the race begins and using timing and judgment to reach that point. The advantage is that you will be moving at a good speed when you finally pull up to the line. The disadvantage is that you may find all the good spots or the spot you have chosen has been taken. Or find yourself hemmed in both to windward and leeward and unable to accelerate.

The second one is called The Dinghy Start. In this start, you will choose a place on the line that you want to be in at the gun and park. That is, you pull up at a slight angle with the wind over your starboard bow and let your sails luff. You want to find a spot where you have a hole or space below or to leeward of you so that you can drive down into that hole to get speed as the gun gets to within 5 to 10 seconds of sounding.

Keep in mind that you will be at a standstill and will need room to accelerate on a bit of a close reach so that you can be at maximum speed by the time the gun goes off. The advantage is that you have the spot you want (if you can protect it) and that you have room to drive off and accelerate just before the gun.

The disadvantage is that if someone moves into the hole you created to leeward, they can make it difficult for you to accelerate up to the line. Plus if they are moving well, they will end up lee bowing you (being just to leeward and ahead) and put you in disturbed air. You will see this start often in big fleet starts where the competitors are very skilled.

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## Four Common Approaches (continued from previous page)

The third start is the Vanderbilt Start. It is named after someone named Vanderbilt. Go figure. In this start, you will sail away from the line on a broad reach. You need to time how long it will take to get back to the starting line on a close reach so that you know when to tack back to reach the line at the gun. When you tack back you will return to the line on the exact opposite course that you went away from it and hopefully arrive right at the start moving at full speed.

Again, you will have chosen a spot on the starting line that you want to be before you start this maneuver. Sailing away from the line for 30 seconds or so and then tacking for your return so that you will arrive at the line 30 seconds later will mean that you begin this approach at about a minute to go. Remember that your tack will eat up seconds so timing and judgment are important.

The advantage is that you will be moving at top speed as you approach the line and be able to aim for a spot on the line as boats are parked or reaching in. The disadvantage is that you might not be able to find your chosen spot if other boats have choked the line, assuming you can't bear off and go down the line looking for a new hole. Then you are trapped below the line and in the second row.

The fourth start is the port tack approach. (Not to be confused with Tom K.'s port tack start at Devil's Lake. That's different.) This starting strategy will have you going down the line toward the committee boat below boats that are on starboard either parked or moving toward the pin on a reach. What you are looking for is a hole in all those starboard tackers. Once you find that hole, you simply tack into it and get moving back toward the line. It is important, once you find that hole, to sail deep into the windward side of it still on port tack. When you can go no further because of starboard tackers, that is the moment to tack over, hopefully lee bowing someone and

then driving back toward the pin end in the hole you have discovered so that you are at max speed as the gun nears. The advantage is that you don't have to create a hole as the parked or luffing boats do.

You just have to find one and then own it at the last moment by delaying your tack back to starboard until you reach the hole and the first starboard tacker coming at you. The disadvantage is that there won't be a hole or that it won't be big enough to do what you want. Of course, there is also the disadvantage of being below everyone and on port tack and thus having no right of way.

We haven't mentioned the dip start, the one Laura Beebe used at least twice at Devil's Lake. It is a somewhat risky start since you have to find a hole from above the line rather than below it but she seems to be good at it. (Unless there is an "I" flag flying.) It might be a good way to stay in clear air before a start and avoid being in the second row.

The upcoming OktoberFast Sunfish Regatta will see some pretty aggressive starting and it would be a good idea to come into the racing with your starting strategy in mind. Conditions at the time of the start may force you to change your mind but you have three minutes (sometimes less) to pull it off. If your strategy fails, recover quickly. Get out to clear air, find a good lane, and go fast in the right direction. You'll be OK and, with a bit of luck, your bad start may not have killed you.

Some if not all of these strategies come with a price. Having a good start that ruins someone else's start will likely make that someone a bit annoyed. They certainly aren't going to say, "*Hey, nice start! Way to go!*" Ok, they might say it but under their breath it might be, "*Thanks a lot, Azole.*"



## Is Nature Good for the Brain?

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OK, here is an example: water/tobacco/stove: answer - pipe. Now you do it. way/ground/weather: (Hint - it's not "under") (I'll give you the answer later, but in the meantime, Williams suggests you go stare at a tree first)

Those that Williams talked to included Paul and Ruth Ann Atchley. He is an expert in distracted driving; she is a psychologist at the University of Kansas. They wondered if the restorative benefits of nature might in fact spring from what's not outside. This is where we entered - is the cure to the negative impact of technology to go back to nature?

Paul Atchley thinks so. "Tech is leading us in a negative direction and nature may prevent that." Atchley's studies show that heavy media multitaskers have an impaired ability to focus. What's more those with highest rates of media use were the less developed socially and emotionally than their peers.

Here are some more Atchley goodies: "Thirty six percent of people check their phones while having sex. Seventy percent of people sleep with their phones."

We also know that the average person looks at their phone 150 times a day. The average teen sends 3000

text messages a month, all hallmarks of addictive, compulsive personality.

Williams says that Ruth Ann Atchley has a hypothesis: "When you are engaged in nature, it leads to mindfulness. ... When you walk out in nature, it's like wearing rose-colored glasses. In nature everything is a little more positive, there's a little more connectedness."

Other researchers Williams talks to include Stephen and Rachel Kaplan at the University of Michigan. They say we need "brain resting", which they describe as "soft fascination" a term for what happens when we watch a sunset or the rain. "The most restorative landscapes," Rachel Kaplan said, "are the ones that hit the sweet spot of being interesting but not too interesting. They should entice our attention but not demand it."

Both Kaplans maintain that nature makes us happier and smarter. Restoration means we become more relaxed and can perform thinking tasks better.

(Answer to associates test item: fair)

More from *The Nature Fix* in our next issue.



From last Sunday: Top left Diane Pierok and John Cannon on rescue/mark setting; middle left finds Diane multitasking as crew just before middle right happened - that's Yours Truly standing on the centerboard of his very dirty boat after a tack and a sudden gust of wind caught us on the low side; below left is Michele Elsaesser at the helm of HSA's flagship; below right are Y legends Pete and Rose. Unstoppable and yet somehow still loveable.



Photos in this issue are courtesy of Michele Elsaesser, John Cannon, and Jerry Brewster.

# Four Myths of Sailing

## From the Spinsheet - Chesapeake Boating Club

### Myth #1:

Sailing is a “members only” kind of sport.

**Fact:** Exclusive, private yacht clubs do exist, but so do public community sailing centers and neighborhood sailing clubs that welcome new members. You can sail your whole life without belonging to a club.

### Myth #2:

Sailing is hard to begin as an adult.

**Fact:** Sailing tends to be passed down through families, so there are many sailors out there who started young. But the skills required to sail a boat are not age-specific or hard to acquire. Many people learn to sail in their 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s.

### Myth #3:

Sailing is expensive.

**Fact:** Sailing can be expensive, but it does not have to be. Community sailing programs offer reasonably priced learn-to-sail programs, public sails for those who want to try the sport, and membership options. Many sailing programs offer reasonably priced boat rentals, boat share opportunities, or free crew options.

### Myth #4:

You need to own a boat to sail.

**Fact:** See #3. There is an expression in the world of sailing: OPB. (Other People’s Boats). Everyone who owns a boat seeks crew to help him or her sail. That crew could be you. If you find a sailing school, a community program, or a club, you will find boat owners seeking crew members for their boats. Those who are interested in racing boats and are willing to show up and learn will always have opportunities to sail ever owning a boat.

