

# Acton Action

Sooooo many sailboats! The Barcolana Regatta off the coast of Italy is a 15-mile, four-sided course race that celebrated its 50th anniversary last October. Over 2600 sailboats and 16,000 sailors being watched by a quarter of a million people on shore.



## The Mercy pg. 3

Donald Crowhurst's story re-enacted for the big screen. Is it worth a two-hour couch sit?

## Too Old? pg. 5

Incredible sea adventures start at age 65. Or so it seems. Who was the oldest circumnavigator ever?

## Beverages & Boats

Saturday, March 7th. Let's meet up to celebrate the end of winter. More on page 6.

## Hiking Less, Going Faster

by Colin Gowland International Sailing Academy  
(used with permission)

It's been said that going fast upwind in moderate and heavy air is all about fitness. Laser sailing upwind in a breeze can be extremely demanding when conditions freshen and even athletes at the highest levels experience fatigue and pain over the course of a windy race day

However, in the quest for highest potential VMG, given that there is almost an unlimited demand for 100% physical output and a limited supply of it, we must maximize hiking effort when it pays the biggest dividends. Likewise, we should choose to take "breaks" when they will be least detrimental to performance, or even beneficial to performance.

Identifying these events and applying the correct action is crucial for winning beats, and is absolutely essential for people who are a bit lighter in the boat or weaker in fitness. This article will cover some strategies to do that, no matter how fit you may or may not be.

*Note that the topic of energy conservation and expenditure is closely tied to changing modes and having the skill and option to sail both low and high modes very well. We apply more physical effort in a low mode, and have the opportunity to conserve energy in high mode. If you only have one mode, it's difficult to take advantage of many of these situations.*

### Higher than Average % Gains Available: Apply Maximum Effort

Sailors who exert extra effort here with good technique will be well rewarded.

### At and immediately after the Start

This shouldn't need much explanation. During these moments, you'll need to use maximum effort in breeze, hiking early and with a lot of power in the rig to come up to full speed and then punch out from the group or at least stay in the front row. Increase drive forces and get out in front early to maintain clear air and open up your race.

(continued next page)

## Hiking Less, Going Faster

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Hike hard, but don't be this guy.

### During Gusts OR Lifts

This is explained in detail [here](#). If the opportunity to apply maximum hike is available, we must do so to accelerate the boat to its highest potential speed for the new wind. Don't discard opportunity for speed gains by heading up too soon. Lifts are treated the same way – get the boat speed up first with sheeting and hiking when it hits, then head up.

### During Favorable Wave Refraction or Motor Boat Waves

Sailors who can identify waves upwind that are catchable/helpful will apply extra effort in combination with alignment to get productive surges or even surfs often resulting in incredible gains in speed and pointing.

### Higher than Average % Losses Occur in Absence of Max Effort: Apply Maximum Effort

More hiking isn't rewarded here with absolute speed/VMG gain necessarily, but without the effort, losses can be catastrophic. Sailors who don't exert extra effort here will be punished with much lower than average speeds and increased leeway. If it's not applied, often extra hiking force is required afterwards to recover the lost boat speed resulting in greater

fatigue overall. The boat is always more responsive to hiking when it is moving faster. In other words, the same hiking effort has a greater effect when you're moving faster.

### During closely spaced wave sets, chop and/or tacks with unfavorable wave skew

Hike hard through steerable wave sets, chop and/or when wave skew presents waves more head on. Increased loads help the boat "break through" the waves and keep it driving and powering through to help recover from bow impact drag. When any key drag component feels too high, try to accelerate with some quick focused hiking.

### In sections where your sail is set up well, but you still have too much weather helm

Much loss occurs from rudder drag with sailors accepting too much weather helm. Try to take the opportunity to accelerate when possible by putting in some extra hiking effort and balancing the boat. Again, once speed is increased, the boat becomes more responsive to future hiking movements, thus conserving energy over the long term.

### Gains Possible with Less Hiking: Apply Less Hiking Effort / Take

### a "break"

Sections of flatter water allow for some high mode sailing due to reduced bow impact drag. High mode sailing will require less hiking effort generally and provides an opportunity for physical recovery.

### During Lulls

This is described in detail [here](#). Correct response usually requires a body weight adjustment while you coast through the lull. Take the opportunity to recover, hike less, and increase VMG. Magic.

### On Tacks with Favorable Wave Skew

This can be a good opportunity to sail higher mode or switch back and forth between low and high modes due to reduced impact drag.

### Don't Pinch

While [pinching](#), the boat ends up slowing down. When a recovery steer is made back down to course, AW is aft and the boat will not respond as easily to hiking – there are more side loads and this will be painfully evident, potentially resulting in more pinching.

### Be Proactive in your Hiking

Anticipate when you'll need to hike and be on top of it early. In accelerations, gusts, lifts, it's very important to get the hiking loads into the boat BEFORE it reacts with any heeling. Once the boat has heeled and helm is induced, hiking will become more difficult and less productive. and a lot of fun.



Above, Donald Crowhurst in 1968 leaving port aboard his trimaran Teignmouth Electron. At right, Colin Firth as Crowhurst in *The Mercy* with Rachel Weisz in the 2018 film.

## Film Series: *The Mercy* - the Story of Donald Crowhurst and the First Round the World Yacht Race

The winter sailing film series continues! And are we sorry. Why? Well the first three films in the cold weather/high wind/fix-the-tarp-on-the-boat off season were all about triumph. Sailors - all female, all extraordinary - went up against Mother Wind and Water and uplifted and inspired us with their skill and daring. *Maiden*, *Maidentrip*, and *Adrift* all had women (or as in *Maidentrip* - a 14-year-old girl) as the central character, all conquered the ocean, all were tales of exemplary skill and pluck at taking on the ocean. And winning.

The most recent installment may have done just the opposite. First of all, the protagonist is male. His name was Donald Crowhurst, a Brit who decided in 1968 to enter the Golden Globe Race. The Golden Globe was the first round the world sailing race and was sponsored by the Sunday Times of London.

A few years earlier, Sir Francis Chichester, also a Brit, became the first person to circumnavigate the

globe single handed, and he did it in nine months, stopping only once on land. He wasn't the first to do this but he did it quicker than anyone else had ever done. (Joshua Slocum is considered to be the first singlehanded circumnavigator back in 1898 but he took three years and many stops. This race was open to all and was required to be non-stop but was inspired by Chichester's singular feat.)

Crowhurst, a weekend sailor with little open ocean experience, decided to enter primarily to win the prize in order to save his financially strapped business, one that made electronics, including a navigation tool. Up to that point he and his family had only sailed their day cruiser in the Bristol Channel.

The film stars Colin Firth as Crowhurst and Rachel Weisz as his wife. I have already decided to remember Colin Firth for his other films like *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mama Mia* rather than this one since *The Mercy* is a tale of incredible derring-do with much

## The Mercy (continued from previous page)

derring and little do. Crowhurst simply had no business being out there with the eight other contestants, although one of the other men, Chay Blyth, was astonishingly even worse off, leaving shore with zero sailing experience. He made it to the Cape of Good Hope before giving up. Blyth had rowed across the Atlantic with another Brit so he was no stranger to the ocean. He was, however, a stranger to sailing. After he set sail from England, he actually followed friends in another sailboat ahead so he could mimic their maneuvers, like tacking and jibing to learn how to do it. (True story.)

**"By the end of the film you are so despondent over this man's desperate adventure that you want to watch a movie like *Schindler's List* just to cheer up."**

The film is more about Crowhurst's psychological state as he prepares for the voyage and continues to the realization midway across the Atlantic that he and his boat are no match for what lies ahead, particularly the Southern Ocean and its reputation as the Sea of Certain Death.

If you have seen the 2006 documentary about this race - *Deep Water* - you know what happened to Crowhurst. *Deep Water* tells the same story but in much better fashion. Crowhurst began experiencing problems with his unfinished boat early on (he had to leave England by October 31, 1968 in order to be an entrant, and neither he nor his boat were ready), and the problems mounted. He made the decision to falsify his log, hoping that he could fool the world into believing he had made the trip. So he simply languished off the coast of South America, once even landing on the Argentinian coast to get material to fix his boat. Yes, a rules violation that he also hoped to conceal. It didn't work.

So, very little sailing going on in this film but a lot of focus on Crowhurst's slow descent into mental illness and the repercussions for this man and his family waiting back home. Crowhurst was so good at faking his position and the world's perception of where he was and when he would return that his family believed he was about to become rich and famous and the signs welcoming him back were strung up in Falmouth, the harbor of return.

At some point Crowhurst's realizes that his deception will be discovered, particularly as it appears to him and those back

home that he is about to win the 5000-pound prize (about 85,000 pounds in today's money) for the fastest circumnavigation. One sailor, Robin Knox Johnston has already finished and taken the prize for first place, but another prize for fastest is yet to be claimed.

Crowhurst knows that if he returns to claim his prize, his logs will be closely examined by people who will undoubtedly discover the truth. All the other competitors save Knox-Johnston have quit the race, been sunk, or were otherwise unable to finish.

By the end of the film you are so despondent over this man's desperate adventure that you want to watch a movie like *Schindler's List* or the *House of Sand and Fog* just to cheer up.

However, if you still want to see a movie about sailing and get some footage of a man overmatched by the wind and waves, go right ahead. You have been warned. I prefer a dentist appointment.

The documentary is a better choice even though even it is described by one writer as something that "should suck even land-lubbers into a whirlpool of gripping adventure, overblown ambitions and sheer human folly." Who would want to miss that? Always go for things that make a giant sucking sound.



Jeanne Socrates - soloist

## Sailing Is a Lifetime Sport

Just last January 2019 the 50th anniversary of the Golden Globe Race was completed (the race in which Donald Crowhurst perished) and the winner? He is 73-year-old Jean-Luc Van Den Heede, a Frenchman who established the record for oldest solo circumnavigator until Socrates claimed that honor last September.

Van Den Heede had to climb the mast of his boat seven times during his record breaking 30,000 mile race and arrived back in France under spinnaker due to running out of fuel to motor up the river to his final destination. It was his sixth circumnavigation.

But if you want to know your average something-genarian who has sailed solo around the world solo - not in a race and not non-stop - that honor goes to Harry Heckel, an American who did it twice. The first time was at age 78. The second was at age 89.

Heckel passed away in 2014 at age 98, nine years after his singular accomplishment in 2005.

**"Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than those you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from safe harbor. Catch the wind in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."** Mark Twain

When Sir Francis Chichester became the first person to solo circumnavigate the world non-stop using the clipper route, he was 65 years old. He had only been sailing since he was in his fifties and was not in the best of health when he left on his trip, but he somehow managed to cope.

Was Chichester the oldest person to accomplish this feat? Not by a long shot. Here are some notable sailors who went to sea long after they cashed their first social security check.

We should start with the oldest to have circumnavigated solo and non-stop. Her name is Jeanne Socrates. Yes, a woman. Jeanne, a British yachtswoman, set sail from the west coast of Canada in October of 2018 and finished in September of this past year. While preparing for the trip, she suffered a fall from a ladder on board her boat in 2017 which broke eight ribs, but she recovered and set sail from Victoria, British Columbia as soon as she was healed.

It was not her first attempt at solo circumnavigation. She had already set the record in 2013 for oldest woman to do it when she was just a youngster of 70.

## How Many Oceans Are There?

You have no doubt heard of the Seven Seas. But what "seas" are we talking about? Well, the term "seven seas" may just be mythology going back thousands of years.

The term most likely describes bodies of water on trade routes, including rivers and bays as well as dividing up parts of the Mediterranean.

The most modern list according to geographers follows here: North Atlantic, South Atlantic, North Pacific, South Pacific, Arctic, Indian, and the Southern Ocean.

The Southern Ocean became official in 2000 and was previously called the Antarctic Ocean. It begins at about 60 degrees south latitude and gets worse from there. You have to go through the Roaring 40's and the Furious 50's to get to the Screaming 60's. Sounds alluring.

# Beverages and Boats! 2020

Saturday, March 7 at 1:00

The Mellow Mushroom at Union Centre in West Chester

9238 Floer Dr, West Chester

Pizza, Calzones, Burgers - Craft Beer

## HSA Sailors Respond to "Hike Less, Sail Faster"

**Brian Callahan**

"We've all been afraid to commit to hiking for fear of being smacked in the face with a wind shift and getting dumped. The article is difficult to disagree with ... be smart, pick your spots, and apply maximum effort when it can really help you but then rest when you can to conserve energy.

"For me, there are three occasions where I apply maximum effort to hiking. The first is at the start. Clear air is just so important, it's always my top priority. The second is in preparation for an approaching gust. I always look upwind and get as prepared as possible when the gust hits (i.e. already hiking) vs reactionary and wasting any advantage the gust might have given me.

"Last, is when I'm experiencing severe weather-helm. I need to hike hard, bear-off and get the boat balanced so I'm not fighting so hard. This last one is difficult because you know you aren't on the optimum heading but if you stayed fighting weather-helm boat speed plummets and you go nowhere. By getting better control over the boat, it'll become more responsive to hiking and steerage and actually make for less effort."

**Roger Henthorn**

"The article seems to indicate that you have to hike hard to maintain boat speed. While some hiking is needed, if the wind puff or strength is too strong or long, I go for the traveler. Letting it off will help reduce the heel of the boat and won't require as much physical hiking and still maintains a good

boat speed.

"When I see a puff approaching, I prepare to hike when it initially hits, but if it seems like we would be hiking out hard and the boat is still heeling over, I ease off the traveler and spill air out of the mainsail. Doing it properly allows the boat to remain flatter and you still keep up the boat speed. Using the traveler seems to work for me and it is a lot easier on the body!"

**Bill Molleran**

"Oh, how I wish I had more opportunity to practice what this article preaches. Unfortunately, 75% of the days on Acton Lake require no hiking. On those days the goal is to keep the weight centered so the boom doesn't hit you in the face. On perhaps 20% of the days some hiking is required, but not enough to require rationing your energy - just hike for all you're worth when the gusts hit, then rest in the lulls.

"Maybe once per year are those days where the wind is high all day and fatigue becomes a factor. I love those days. I don't always do well, but I enjoy trying. I like them more since I added a permanent jens rig to my boat. This has helped a lot to make hiking more effective.

"The other tactic I use is to take advantage of the asymmetry of a Sunfish. Port tack has a flatter sail due to it draping over the mast. This makes the boat a little less powerful on port and easier to handle. I will flip to port tack when I need a break and take a little breather.

"Tacking in gusty conditions is dangerous and dicey and can result in you being in irons with significant lost time. But when your abdominals are burning, and you can't stay out any longer, port tack is better than being out of control on starboard."