

Acton Action

January 2025

Happy new year!

As January and the quiet winter descends upon us and we sit by the fire contemplating the new racing season, we make mental notes of what items need replaced on our racing boats, and dream of the finish line with the rest of the fleet behind us!

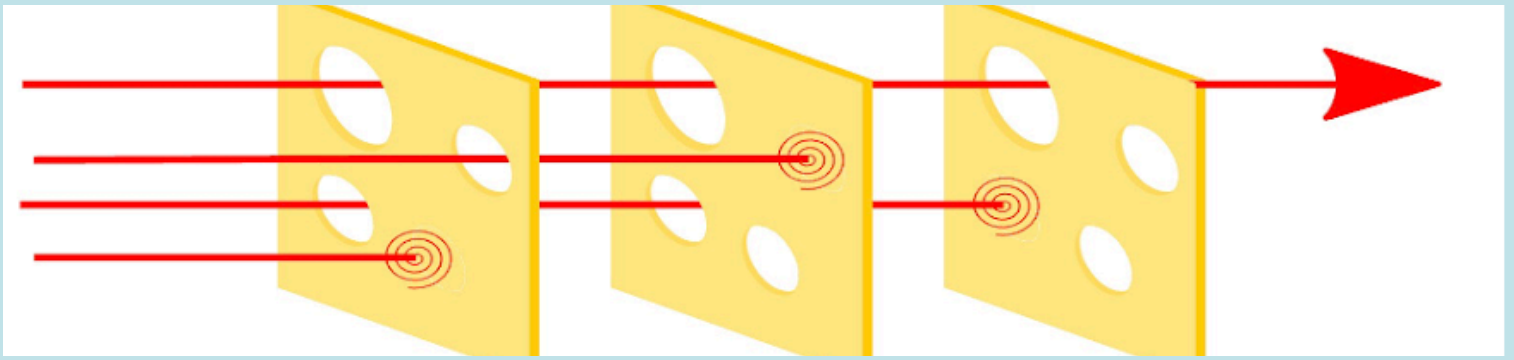
Race Clinic

January 25, 2025 Saturday at 12:30 at Hueston Woods Lodge starting with lunch at The Smokehouse restaurant!

Commodore's Corner: Safety and Swiss Cheese



Time for some sea stories, the swiss cheese model of accident prevention, and being a safety minded sailor out on Acton Lake. Back in the day, as one of those colored-jersey flight-deck guys, our job was to manage risk not only for ourselves in this demanding environment, but also for the pilots we launched and recovered. The crusty old Chiefs (wized by all the accidents they'd seen by their mid 30's) impressed upon us that accidents happened usually when three things failed. For example, we had three layers of defense for preventing jet engine damage, which could become a fatal accident. The first of the three was to "dive" the intakes of our aircraft and look for damage to the compressor's blades. We also walked the flight deck every day, shoulder to shoulder, looking for foreign objects the jet engines might ingest. Finally, the pilots on their preflight would look down the intake one last time for signs of foreign objects. Each of these separate actions was a layer of safety—a layering system that is now widely known as the Swiss Cheese model. Accidents happen when all layers of defense (the slices of cheese) are defeated.



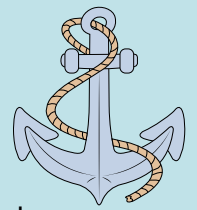
At Acton Lake, HSA is blessed this coming season to having a slightly larger and more roomy rescue boat—a beautiful 16 ft Boston Whaler. Like our previous boat, it is equipped with an outboard motor that propels it along whether it be setting marks or helping sailors who have capsized. This running outboard, plain and simple, is the most dangerous part of HSA's Sundays.

Safely operating this new rescue boat will be a topic in the Lunch & Learn sessions Mike Stratton is organizing and will be covered again in person out at dockside once the season starts. In preparation of those two training opportunities, you might be thinking to yourself, how might I layer my defenses to make everyone safer when operating this boat in/around club members.

There are several ways to make power boat operations safer starting with a very simple step—wear the throttle “stop” lanyard on the rescue boat motor tiller. It stretches four feet and has a padded sleeve for your wrist. The other end clips very simply over the motor's Run Toggle switch. If you should fall overboard, it flips the toggle to Off. Motorboat accidents are more common and potentially far more dangerous than sailboat accidents. This lanyard adds a layer of protection and if you need to go forward to the bow say to help someone, it easily detaches to shut off the engine—a best practice around sailors in the water.

It is an easy layer of cheese to add and did you notice the second layer of cheese added just then? Turning off the motor when going forward to help a sailor in the water is another best practice! The new motor has electronic fuel injection so all those who are hesitant to shut it off fearing it won't restart easily should rest easy knowing those days are hopefully behind us.





Another layer of defense, and one that the US Coast Guard, insurance companies, and our very own Ohio Department of Natural Resources understands, is to educate yourself on the dangers of propeller strikes. If you Google “ODNR Propeller Strikes” you’ll see these comments and tips:

Did You Know...

- A typical three-blade propeller running at 3,200 rpm can inflict 160 impacts in one second.
- A typical recreational propeller can travel from head to toe on an average person in less than one-tenth of a second.
- Most propeller accidents CAN be prevented!

What Can You Do?

- Be aware of what is going on around you!
- Wear your engine cut-off lanyard AND your life jacket at ALL times.
- Assign a passenger to keep watch around the propeller area of your boat when people are in the water (and never reverse back to them).
- Read and follow all the safety instructions in your boat and engine operator’s manuals.
- Consider purchasing propeller safety devices for your boat.

The ODNR page concludes with a tragic story and ways to prevent accidents much like it and the fatal propeller strike stories at the Sarasota Florida Yacht Club or the Centerport Yacht Club in New York. Every year there are literally hundreds of similar propeller-related accidents that could have been prevented. In fact, our insurance provider recommends “that propeller guards be installed on all outboard motors used for teaching junior sailing, coaching sailing, running races, and supporting recreational water sports.” It issued a press release to that effect way back in 2013 and efforts to install them have been gaining momentum ever since then. Sail Newport, New England’s largest public sailing center and Rhode Island’s premier public sailing site has this to say about propeller guards: “There is marginal decline in top end speed, but our instructors/coaches don't need to be going 40 mph. When they do need to go fast, we don't mind the difference between going 35 vs 40. It is worth it for the safety gain.” Kim Hapgood, Program Director, Sail Newport

HSA has a long history and culture of safety but it requires all of us to remain vigilant and mindful of the dangers inherent in boating. “Stop” lanyards, life jackets, operational protocols when sailors are in the water, and propeller guards are all layers of defense that someday may save a life on Acton Lake. Your part is to educate yourself and keep all layers of your cheese in place.

Extra, Extra, Read All About It!

HSA and Acton Lake are famous! We all know that, but Sailing World magazine's "winter" edition just hit the streets with former HSA member Alan Glos recounting his early sailing days on Acton Lake. The article, Long Live Puddle Racing, makes a great case for how sailing one afternoon on our "puddle lake" with its variable winds is worth a month of sailing education on a steady-wind body of water. And, unlike larger lakes where race legs can be long and racers well spaced, our compact race courses require intimate knowledge of the rules of the road and also good in-traffic boat handling skills. Anyway, it is a great read. Visit your favorite book store for a copy today or

subscribe at: <https://www.sailingworld.com>

