

On The Water - The Running Pole.....

Using the Running Pole

The running pole is not the best loved piece of kit on our boat! However we do find it quick on runs until we plane, so we have kept trying and now often manage without major knitting. Here's how we do it, in case it's any help.

First, some notes on how we sail the boat - as other set-ups may need something different:

1. We are on a single patch kite. I think 2 patch may be easier for getting it down.
2. We have rerigged our sprit tack line and check lines as one, as on the new 2 patch system.
3. We have removed the long elastic from the boom and have the running pole loose. It stows through small loops near the back of the boom and hooks to the original piece of elastic near the front of the boom.
4. When running, the crew sits on the windward gunwhale touching the shroud and the helm on the thwart to leeward.
5. We always go into normal reaching mode with sprit extended after hoisting and before dropping as we always get a massive knot otherwise.

Here is our action log (i.e. what we wished we'd done afterwards):

Crew	Helm
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After hoisting in reaching mode:	
1. Ease halyard.	1. Pull on check line.
2. Put the check line knot in the 'V'. Cleat halyard.	
3. Goosewing with weather sheet	Tension halyard.
(Get speed on - on short legs you won't want to bother with the pole.)	
	4. Pass pole from boom to crew.*
5. Put pole onto windward sheet and mast.	

Gybing (if your pole is free in the boat):	
	1. Gybe the jib sheets
2. Pull in new spinnaker sheet.	2. Gybe the main.
3. Put pole onto new sheet, take off old sheet and put onto mast.	3. Pull on windward sheet and set kite.

Gybing (if you use the elastic system supplied with the boat):	
1. Remove the pole and pass it back down the	1. Gybe the jib sheets.

leeward side of the boom. Take care to pass it the right side of the shrouds (it may help to sheet the main in very slightly)	
2. Pull in new spinnaker sheet and goosewing	2. Gybe the main.
	3. Pass pole from boom to crew.*
4. Put pole onto windward sheet and mast.	

Changing from Running to Reaching mode before the drop:	
1. Keep spinnaker setting.	1. Release check line knot from 'V'.
	2. Pull tweaker line down mast.
	3. Pull halyard up.
4. Take pole off and stow on boom.	4. Take leeward spinnaker sheet and set kite in reaching mode or if you are dropping in a panic make sure there's tension on the sheets (i.e. not flapping).

* If the crew is sat on windward gunwhale we find there is less disturbance in the boat if the helm passes the pole to the crew. Prior to this the crew is keeping the spinnaker filled with an arm held out.

Easy really - but here are some more tips from our experience:

Troubleshooting:

1. If kite ends up twisted around the sprit, or the downhaul or sheets fall over the sprit then send crew onto foredeck.
2. If clew gets into chute before the head and it is stuck, relaunch and try again, keeping some tension on the sheet while dropping.
3. If using the continuous elastic system take care not to twist the pole over so that a loop is formed in the elastic on the ring.

Deciding which side to set:

1. A burgee is particularly useful in deciding which side to set the spinnaker and vital for knowing when to gybe when it is windy.
2. Aim to set the spinnaker on the windward side of the boat. The spinnaker will not fill well if the mainsail is "by the lee".
3. If you are heading back to a leeward mark that you have just beat up from then expect to be on the opposite tack to the longest tack of the beat.

Dropping and hoisting in Running Mode:

1. Dropping in Running mode is a fairly high risk strategy. It is very easy for the sheets to fall in front of the sprit and usually at a time when the leeward mark is fast approaching!
2. Some boats do hoist directly into running mode. It seems to be important not to let the sheets loose so they fall over the front of the sprit.

Tactical Implications:

1. Running down on port tack, especially amongst other boats that are gybing downwind leaves you with few, if any, rights of way. Starboard tack running boats should still be aware that they will usually have to give way to starboard tack boats gybing downwind as these boats will have luffing rights.

2. With the continuous elastic system it may be less easy to "crash-gybe" than with a free pole.

Things in the water!

1. We have the centreboard 3/4 up in light weather and as far up as we dare when windier. It is a good idea to put it down before manoeuvres -gybes etc.

2. Don't leave pole dragging in the water for too long (e.g. in the middle of a gybe) as it works well as a brake.

3. With loose pole, recommend only dropping pole overboard when being followed by someone who will pick it up for you. It does seem to float for some time though.

Good Luck