

Laser World



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CLUB RACING TIPS

CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICAN
CHAMPIONSHIP 2014

INTERVIEW WITH PAVLOS KONTIDES



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Club Racing Tips

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Robert Scheidt training!!!



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Try to feel the boat and look for improvements.



© Pedro Martínez

Practice quick recovery from a capsize



© Chuck Lantz

Good trim + no rudder = speed

Jeff Martin talks about improving performance in club racing for no extra cost and not much extra effort.

For the majority of Laser sailors who race only at their local club, how Robert Scheidt and Tom Slingsby train is as much use as comparing how Sebastian Vettel drives his Formula One racing car with our drive to work each day. We all take part in races for different reasons. It is that competitive spirit that is in most of us that gives us satisfaction when we finish a race with one or more people behind us. If we don't sail well we want to do better next time or we have an excuse about what went wrong. The solution is to practice during racing and when we are not racing.

This article offers a few suggestions on how to improve your performance on the race course in a club race for no cost and not much extra effort.

Time on the Water

In general the more time you spend playing or practising any sport the better you will get. Sailing is no different and all coaches agree that 'time on the water' is important. Time on the water can be either racing, training or both.

Time is precious. Most sailors have to drive to their boat, sometimes quite a long way. Plan to arrive at the boat park 45 minutes earlier than usual on each visit and do some training before a race. Going afloat early will allow you to physically warm up and reduce the risk of injury, settle yourself into racing mode and give you time to practice a few things.

Always save yourself 15 minutes before the warning signal to warm up with some tacks and gybes, some up and downwind sailing on each tack and some start line approaches. Think about how you are going in this warm up, try to 'feel' the boat and look for improvements.

If there are no marks on your course to practice with, make your own with some thin line and a 4 litre empty milk container and a bag of sand for an anchor. Set it on the way to the start for practice and pick it up after the race.

Practice Starts - 30 minutes

In all types of racing the start is critical. The instant the gun goes is proportionately the most important part of the race. The shorter a race is the more important the start becomes. In most club races we normally only have one chance per race to get a good start. I estimate that over 70% of club racers could improve their start by giving it more priority and practising starts.

A good stop watch is very important

Normally club start lines are short so choosing the right end is not critical. We all know that being as close as possible to the start line at the start gun is important but how many times do we end up misjudging the perfect start by being too late, too early and not sailing fast at the gun?

TIP 1: Use a mark to practice starts. Sail up to a mark or buoy and start your watch with a 1 minute countdown. Sail down wind from the mark for 20 seconds and then turn to windward so that you are in a position that you can sail back to the mark close hauled in 30 seconds to be at the mark at full speed at the end of the count down. Visualise your distance to the mark at 30 seconds so that you can make corrections and then keep repeating that exercise until you are confident of judging the distance and angle to start well in different prevailing wind strength.

In time you will need to practise less.

TIP 2: At the committee boat (starboard) end make sure you have planned your approach so you do not get pushed out by a leeward boat. Even more important if you have chosen to start nearer to the port end mark make sure you do not have to tack in the last few seconds to pass the starting mark. If you have any doubts tack early and come back to the middle of the line to find a gap. On a short club line a clear start right on the line with speed at the



starting signal is more important than being in the absolute best position along the line.

Practice Tacking and Gybing - 30 minutes

Once you have mastered starting you can reduce that and build up the practice of tacks and gybes.

Think about your body position in the boat. Repeat tacks until you have good speed out of the tack. With gybes again practice until each gybe is smooth with no risk of hooking the mainsheet over the edge of the transom. Think about how you sail through each tack and gybe

Practice Upwind & Downwind Sailing - 30 minutes

Upwind, concentrate on keeping the boat moving through waves. In strong winds, when you are overpowered, ease the mainsheet in gusts and on a wave as you steer through the waves pulling it in again virtually immediately after the release. Try to 'feel' what is happening to the boat and boat speed. Listen to the boat going through the water and try to steer the boat so the boat is not stopped by waves. Adjust your style and steering to reduce the 'slamming' noise as the boats hits a wave.

Smoothness and confidence are the goals for downwind sailing. 'Feel' the boat downwind and alter course with balance and minimal rudder to maximise speed. Always try to keep sailing down a wave and alter course to avoid sailing into the back of larger waves.

Practice - no rudder sailing

This is a one off exercise for light winds to help you understand and feel how balancing a boat with heel and sail can affect the how a boat turns. It also shows that you can help a boat turn without lots of rudder angle and more

important, if the boat is not trimmed properly it will fight the rudder which is really slow. Once again 'feel' is important. If you can feel a lot of load on the rudder then you are sailing like driving a car with the parking brake on!

Practice when racing

This may seem strange but there are times when you can best see the affect a change in sailing style or boat or sail trim has when racing against other boats. Use some races for practice to test speed on straight line sailing a tack upwind and downwind

Practice - looking, listening listening and feeling

If you train yourself to look, listen and feel at all times whilst training and racing, you will continually learn a lot about you and your Laser. Providing you keep looking, listening and feeling and you try different things you will learn what is slow and fast. If you consciously keep your mind and body open to try different things your sub conscious will keep absorbing information. This is how all of us learnt about life around us when we were babies and growing up!

Sail fast and remember if nothing else an extra 45 minutes on the water is another 45 minutes of exercise which is good for you, fun and will improve your results!



© Thom Touw

Tom Slingsby at London 2012 Olympics



© Munther Al Zadjali

Practise boat trim in different conditions



© Matias Capizzano

A slight heel round the mark helps steering



Starting techniques in small fleets are different from big fleets

Pavlos Kontides - to win an Olympic

A minute with

Pavlos Kontides



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Pavlos Kontides (CYP)

Age: 24

Height: 183 cm

Weight: 82 kg



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*Silver medallist at the
London 2012 Olympics*



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*"Robert Scheidt's return to the Laser
class is a big challenge for all of us."*

Why did you choose a Laser?

Coming from a small island like Cyprus choices are limited, so I had to choose between Laser, 470 or windsurfing. I also had to take into consideration what fits my body structure.

Who introduced you to Sailing?

My father who was also a sailor, in a Finn. I started sailing at the age of 9, at the Limassol Sailing Club

Do you feel Cypriots have an advantage in sailing as they can sail year round in a warm climate?

This is a fact, not just a feeling! Sadly this present that we've received from God and nature is not used properly. Cyprus should be full of sailors! Today this is not the case, however this is one of my goals/dreams for the future

How did it feel to win the Silver medal in the 2012 Olympics becoming the first Cypriot athlete to ever win an Olympic medal for your country?

Such feelings are unique and pretty hard to describe in words ... it is for such moments that in all your life you are dedicated, committed, passionate and motivated on what you do! Believe me when I say that it was worth every moment of hard training and all the sacrifices that I have made - not just for those few seconds of glory, but for many years of history.

Training for the Olympics is a big commitment. What do you think is the reason for your success?

That I always strive for perfection and of course setting high goals which will keep me motivated along the journey.

Do you have any sponsors?

Currently I am sponsored by OPAP Cyprus, a company specializing in betting and lucky games, such as Lotto & Joker. I owe a big thank you to OPAP as not only do they support me, but they also support the whole nation with very big donations in charity as well as funding for medical and other social issues. I am really blessed and proud to have them by my side!

Of course I am constantly in search of more sponsors as expenses in sailing are high.

How much support did you have from your family?

My family offered me everything! From a very young age they were always next to me in both failure and success and they always believed in me. They always told me that I could achieve my dreams. Their economical and moral support was huge. Without them I definitely wouldn't be able to achieve what I have achieved so far in sailing and in other aspects of my life.

I also owe a lot to my current coach - Jozo Jakelic. We have worked together since 2007. He developed me not only as a sailor, but as a person as well! I feel like he is my second father and our relationship is not limited to just that of an athlete and a coach, he contributed in a big part of my life. He is family!

Tell us about your injuries in the past couple of years which nearly prevented you competing in a Laser?

In early 2010 I was diagnosed with discus hernia at my lower back and the first doctor who examined me told me to stop sailing. Obviously I did not listen to him and managed to avoid surgery. Since then I have to take extra care of my back. Also at the start of 2011 I had a bone fracture in my hand and things looked pretty bad. I never thought of quitting, but I was worried that I would not have enough time to prepare myself for the Olympics. I was training in the gym, with the cast on my arm, 2 times per day. Sometimes the total training hours in a day would reach 7! I would go back home and dry the sweat from the cast with a hairdryer. During those 2 months of my life I became tougher mentally, something that helped me and will always help me a lot.

Where did you study for your degree?

I studied 'Ship Science' at Southampton University in England. I have completed my bachelor's degree but hope to do a masters degree in the future although I am not sure in which field yet.

How did you train & study?

This needs very good programming and allocation of time. Usually there is no free time, so not much time relaxing. Since the preparation for the Olympic Games and the university studies are both demanding I had paused my

the first Cypriot athlete medal for his country!

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www.pavloskontides.com
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studies for 2 years before the Games and went to full time sailing. After the games I returned back, as a part 3 student. Believe me it was not easy to adapt back to this routine again!

What is your training programme?

- How often do you train?

6 days / week depending on the wind.

- How do you train?

Sailing, gym, weights, bikes, etc. In our days sailing is very demanding in fitness as all sailors are stepping up their game as a professional athlete. So you have to train a lot, in order to gain enough strength, stamina and power which can help you a lot, but never guarantees good results, as sailing depends on many factors, which is why it's considered to be the most challenging sport in the world!

- Do you have a training partner?

Yes I do for many years now -Tonci Stipanovic from Croatia helped me a lot and I also helped him. We usually have a group of really good Laser sailors training with us. This is the only way forward in our sport. You need comparison non-stop as you don't have any measurement parameters, such as distance or time, like in other sports.

What are your plans for 2014?

I already sailed Miami, Palma and Hyeres World Cups. I have also sailed in the Garda European Cup and the Grand Prix Mornar - a race that takes place in Split before the Europeans and the final is done at night and has a money prize. Afterwards the Europeans and the Olympic test event. ISAF Worlds will take part in Santander and is the MOST IMPORTANT EVENT OF THE SEASON. Then Qingdao and Melbourne World Cup. As you can see the schedule is pretty full.

Robert Scheidt has returned to Laser sailing - how do you feel about competing against him in Brazil?

Robert Scheidt's return to the Laser class is a big challenge for all of us, the younger guns, as we would all like to beat him in a race and more importantly in a championship. What he does at this age is for sure not an easy task and having to handle a family as well at the same time. It is admirable!

I would love to compete against him in Rio Olympics as a win against him will be even sweeter due to his status and achievements in the sport, however the depth and quality of Laser sailors it's the biggest in all Olympic classes. 10 if not even more sailors are always competing for a place on the podium. In addition don't forget that Scheidt will need to qualify against Bruno Fontes and other Brazilian Laser sailors.

Tell us about your campaign for Cyprus to invest in young athletes.

This campaign is entirely due to OPAP Cyprus. They offered the money and I chose to offer them Olympic hopefuls who were also studying at that time, as a scholarship. This was mainly because I want to prove that you can still do the sport while studying and give an incentive to young athletes to try and make an Olympic qualification as this is important for a country like Cyprus when we only compete in Olympic Games with about 16 athletes!

Your favourite place to sail?

Limassol Cyprus, my home town, its warm conditions are mostly stable, you sail next to the beach after you launch (not a long distance sailing until you can start training). The boat can be kept rigged so you just need to change clothes. In addition I am at home! Having all this - you can never ask for something else. I also enjoyed sailing in Perth.

What are your future goals?

I would really like to win gold medals at the Olympics, Worlds, Europeans and World Cup Regattas. In all of them I have a medal but not gold yet. Also I would love to sail The Americas Cup, Extreme Sailing Series, Match Race, etc.

You were voted 'Man of the Year' and 'Athlete of the Year'. How does it feel to be a national hero?

It is a big honor when your achievements are recognized in such a way. In the same time it is also a big responsibility as the whole nation is expecting from you. But this is a responsibility I like to carry as it motivates me even more.

Favourite food?

Souvlakia and gemista (traditional Cypriot food). I like all kinds of foods, for example a good, medium, veal steak.

What music do you listen to?

I like pop and whatever has a good rhythm and a cheerful, happy emotion.

Sporting hero?

When I was young and started to sail laser Robert Scheidt was the one who inspired me, not only for his achievements but also because of his origin not from a traditionally wealthy sport country where big economical support is offered to athletes. Now I have the chance to compete against him and try to be a sporting hero for younger generations all over the world.

Favourite TV Show?

Dragon's Den and The Apprentice.

Favourite film? 300



© OnEdition, Olympics 2012

London Olympics 2012,
Weymouth, UK



Palma, 2014

Central & South American Laser Masters Championship 2014

© Jesús Rened



The popular Masters fleet!



Light and shifty winds tested sailors skills!



Laser Masters Championship 2013

Light winds and a great atmosphere for the Masters sailors in Argentina.

With its almost perfect weather all year round and the huge Río de la Plata riverside, Buenos Aires, the capital city of Argentina, is a beautiful spot for Laser sailors. The local fleet can gather more than a hundred boats for a national championship, and the competition is fierce.

The master (+35) fleet is also very popular and competitive, with championships that take place at least once a month. Good geography and a large fleet guarantee a great competition and this was the case with the 2014 Central & South American Laser Masters championship. The regatta took place on the 6th, 7th and 8th of March and it attracted almost 90 sailors combining the Radial and Standard fleet. Besides the Argentines, there were

sailors from Uruguay, Chile, Brazil and the Dominican Republic.

Being the end of the summer, the weather was nice, but not very windy. The two races scheduled for each day were sailed in mostly light and shifty winds, a condition that tested the sailors skills. And their patience! The hard work in the water was combined with a great atmosphere in the club - the Club Náutico San Isidro, located to the north of the city - with beer and the traditional Argentine "asado" as a welcoming gift for the competitors.

The closing ceremony had a beautiful announcement: the next Center South American Laser Master championship will be in March 2015 in one of the most exciting places to sail in the region, Buzios, the seaside hotspot of Brazil.

RESULTS

Laser Standard Apprentice Master

- 1st: Alejo Acosta (ARG)
- 2nd: Rodrigo Benedetto (ARG)
- 3rd: Fernando Rosado (ARG)

Laser Standard Master

- 1st: Carlos Castrillo (ARG)
- 2nd: Gustavo Fleiderman (ARG)
- 3rd: Hector Bentorino (ARG)

Laser Standard Grand Master

- 1st: Héctor Longarela (ARG)
- 2nd: José Asad (ARG)
- 3rd: Alcir de Barros Cachaluz (BRA)

Laser Standard Great Grand Master

- 1st: Alberto Larrea (ARG)

Laser Radial Apprentice Master

- 1st: Agustin Ronconi (ARG)
- 2nd: Nicolás Cassese (ARG)
- 3rd: Marcelo Romero (ARG)

Laser Radial Master

- 1st: Luiz Andre Castro (BRA)
- 2nd: Martín Propato (ARG)
- 3rd: Edi Branz (ARG)

Laser Radial Grand Master

- 1st: Jorge Smolar (ARG)
- 2nd: Eduardo Rico (ARG)
- 3rd: Raul Tati Lena (ARG)

Laser Radial Great Grand Master

- 1st: Hernán Mieres (ARG)
- 2nd: Alberto Nago (ARG)
- 3rd: Raúl Conte (ARG)

2014 Laser World Masters Smashes All Records

Four months before the start of the event the record entry for a Laser Masters Championship has been smashed with still two months before the entry closes. Applications for a place have already exceeded 500 from 37 countries and all 6 continents.

The first Laser World Masters was held in 1981 and year on year the numbers keep growing. Many sports have World Masters events and Laser flew the flag for sailing in the first World Masters Games

in 1985, a role it has continued ever since then. Masters events are serious competition. The World Masters Games held every 4 years now attracts over 28,000 competitors across 28 sports. That is bigger than the Olympic Games.

The growth continues down through continental and national masters championships and circuits.

"Cheat the nursing home – sail a Laser!"