

Brooklyn Ocean Challenge Cup
Double handed on a J 105
03 October 2008
Chinese Yacht Club, and others,
Greenport NY

When I first received the email with the link to the Chinese YC and the Brooklyn Ocean Challenge Cup race I thought the sender was pulling my leg. Turns out he was not and I have the bruises to prove it. "He" was Peter Rugg, owner of the J 105 "Jaded," aboard which Peter and one of his regular crew won the last Block Island Race in the DH class. After some email traffic back and forth in August, and the inability of Peter's regular crew to make the race, I got the call in mid-September to sign on for the Friday afternoon start 3 October.

Peter is a very capable sailor with a long history of sailing across a wide spectrum from dinghies to offshore and one design and my sailing CV is similar. We only sailed together for the first time in this race but I would say that things were very gentlemanly and pleasant and at times kind of funny. I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

"Jaded" typifies the J-105's value in that they can be raced in the OD class events or in PHRF mixed fleets and in our case double-handed, all with ease. She is #92, a 1994 pre scrimp version with a wheel. The sails we used were an old North class main that Peter had a 2nd reef installed in, and a cut down North string-sail class Jib which was now close to a "4" in size. We were entered in the Double Handed class with the PHRF rating of 81 with the 155 headsail and a 100 sqm kite. Jaded's instruments are older basic Raymarine and the pilot was an even older Autohelm clamp-on-the-wheel variety. For navigation we used a handheld Garmin GPS with mapping function & with all the waypoints entered before hand.

The start was at 1600 on Friday afternoon, off the village of Greenport at the eastern tip of the north fork of Long Is. The course took us to the east with some zigging and zagging around a couple government marks, around the north tip of Gardiners Island and off to Block Is, counter clock-wise around the island and back to Greenport, 90 miles for handicapping purposes. The breeze was, by and large, 20-25 knots from the west, with some higher gusts, one at 32 knots on our meters but diminishing to around 8-12 or so and from the northwest by about 02:30 Saturday morning when we finished.

The starting area was between Greenport and Deering Harbor on adjacent Shelter Island. With 20 plus knots of breeze, 27 boats (the whole fleet started at once) and a wicked ebb tide looking to wash the unwary down-course of the line, caution on the starting grid was the operative word. The first corner was a navigational mark and the course to it was just slightly favored on port gybe. We ran the line on starboard with a minute to go and at the gun, gybed and raised the sock on the 89 sqm kite. Sailing DH does have its advantages in that we had one of the cleanest sets in the fleet and within a few seconds had the boat blasting off down the track at about 11 knots in the 25 knot puff that of course descended on the fleet at just this moment. Communication between me, trimming, and Peter steering was along the lines of a normal down wind leg with me keeping up a running commentary on the pressure and angle and Peter putting the boat under the kite and keeping her flat and avoiding any possibility of entanglements with other, bigger (and slower) and/or less organized boats.

At the first mark we picked the right moment to sock the kite, this being the preferred method to gybe in the traffic and the breeze, rounded the mark and reset the kite on starboard gybe and were now running hard amongst the 40 footers. There were 4 other 105's in the race and we were well ahead of them at this point. The breeze was puffy with big swings in pressure from 17 up to about 25 knots but with less violent swings in angle. The next corner was a MoA mark with a lay line that we had to call from a fair way off. By this time we were in fourth spot, one of the larger boats having pulled off to the infield to recover the shreds of a kite and re-set a new one. The lead pack was, I think, a Swan 42, a J-122, a C&C 40 and ourselves.

By this time the fleet had sorted itself out and had some sea room which was just as well because this is where I saw 32 knots of true breeze on the meters with perhaps 14 knots on the steam gauge. This leg included a mark which just glanced the rock pile at the NW corner of Gardiner's Island and then on to the SW corner of Block Island some 20 miles away. The breeze was constantly up over 20 for the bulk of this leg and with the small chop gave plenty of good long surf shoots at 10-12 knots and higher with our top speed being observed at 15.4 knots. I continue to be amazed at just how comfortable and panic free 12-14 knots is on a 105. Having grown up ocean racing on 1970's IOR boats, the idea of doing 14 knots on anything under about 60 feet, and with such serenity, and with only two folks aboard was just not on. One thing that has not changed however is the need for constant vigilance when at sea.....

Peter had just emerged from a power nap and we were chatting, discussing the approach of Block Island when, distracted by the discussion, I put the boat down a wave, got a bit too deep and the kite collapsed from the leech and wrapped around the headstay. The ensuing 20 minutes or so unscrambling this boo-boo for sure cost us lots of places in the overall scheme of things. The good news is we got it down with nary a ding save for a straightforward 15 inch gash. The trick was to let the halyard go and I think apparently the weight of the ATN sock, combined I think with the relative slipperiness of the (wet) Mylar film of the jib allowed me to slowly drag the sail, which by this time had about 8 wraps around the stay, down on deck and stuff below. My fore-arms are still reeling from this particular exercise. It was now of course dark and we were power reaching along the south side of Block Island, pinging off the marks of the course which were the cans guarding the rocks on that iron bound coast.

In the kite wrap melee we lost track of who was who, & where, but there were plenty of boats all around us going up past Old Harbor and to the 1BI bell. As we sailed out from under the cliffs at the north end of the Island the first reef was called for. The breeze was in the high teens to 20's true and the sea quite short and nasty.

Well, we had had our sleigh ride and now it was time to pay the piper. With no crew on the rail the general conditions, a short, steep chop (the current had turned and was flooding west against the breeze) and no moon (hard to see the waves) made for a very wet & bumpy few hours. In short order we had the second reef in and our teeth gritted. The general plan was to sail a pretty easy trim to keep the boat sailing fast and not be too keen on pointing. The best of the flood tide was on the Montauk side and the breeze was forecast to lift us to the NW. As we closed the lee of Gardiner's Island the seas abated and Peter's steering trick was to generally let the pilot steer while he would make frequent adjustments based on the wind angle as observed on the meter. We had to honor the mark guarding the ruins at the north end off Gardiner's after which the course was a cracked reach over to the finish off the entrance to Greenport. The breeze had abated to the point where we shook the reefs and powered along at over 7 knots on the meter, at perhaps 60-70 degrees apparent,

relishing the upright aspect of the yacht and the lack of crashing and bashing. As so often happens in these races the breeze was falling off the dial pretty quickly as we crossed the line at 02:38. There were boats finishing all around us and we had heard the guys in the Class 40 Dragon, the other DH boat finishing just in front of us. Well done Peter and well done boat. A small electrical problem (blown fuse in the wiring harness) which we did not identify, and so fix, until later on in the morning made it impossible to start the engine so we sailed into the dock, tidied up to a decent degree and broke out the Mt Gay. Another yacht race had been run and won....

Race results are here:

<http://chineseyachtclub.com/files/Download/BOCC2008Results%2010-06-08r.pdf>

There were 5 105's in the race. Dark and Stormy won the class AND the Brooklyn Ocean Challenge Cup-Well Mike and Crew!!!

Mike's elapsed time was 9 hours 58 mins & 29 seconds (for 90 miles...)

Ours was 10:34:38, so about 40 minutes astern, a good chunk of which was taken up with the spinnaker wrap I think and the rest, the missing 7000 lbs on the rail. Mike has told me they did not reef on the beat back, whereas we sailed with two reefs and a 4 basically.

Both of us managed to beat a number of larger boats, boat for boat.

I would not hesitate to sign up for this race again in '09 especially on a 105

Lessons learned specific to double handing (racing) a J-105.

(Please note the following pictures are aboard Dark & Stormy and NOT aboard Jaded).

Mainsail and reefing:

Jaded is I think unique in the US J 105 fleet in that it has a Charleston Spars rig. The detail at the mast gate does not quite keep the "standard" slides that North Sails use on their sails in the mast

groove like this one shown here.



This is by and large a minor flaw in the gate on this particular spar. In any event when we reefed, rather than the luff of the sail being captive by the slides in the mast groove, the slides would fall out of the mast groove and the sail would therefore be flogging around, or it was until I secured it up with some sail ties. This was also a pain in terms of getting the sail slides back into the mast when shaking out the reefs. Peter has got a work list line item for the gate mods but if I was going to do lots of this kind of racing (and if I had a 105, I would for sure do a LOT of this kind of racing) I would change, or require that, the luff slides be Allslip brand from Bainbridge. Allslip slides look this: the suitable one would probably the middle one in the bottom row.

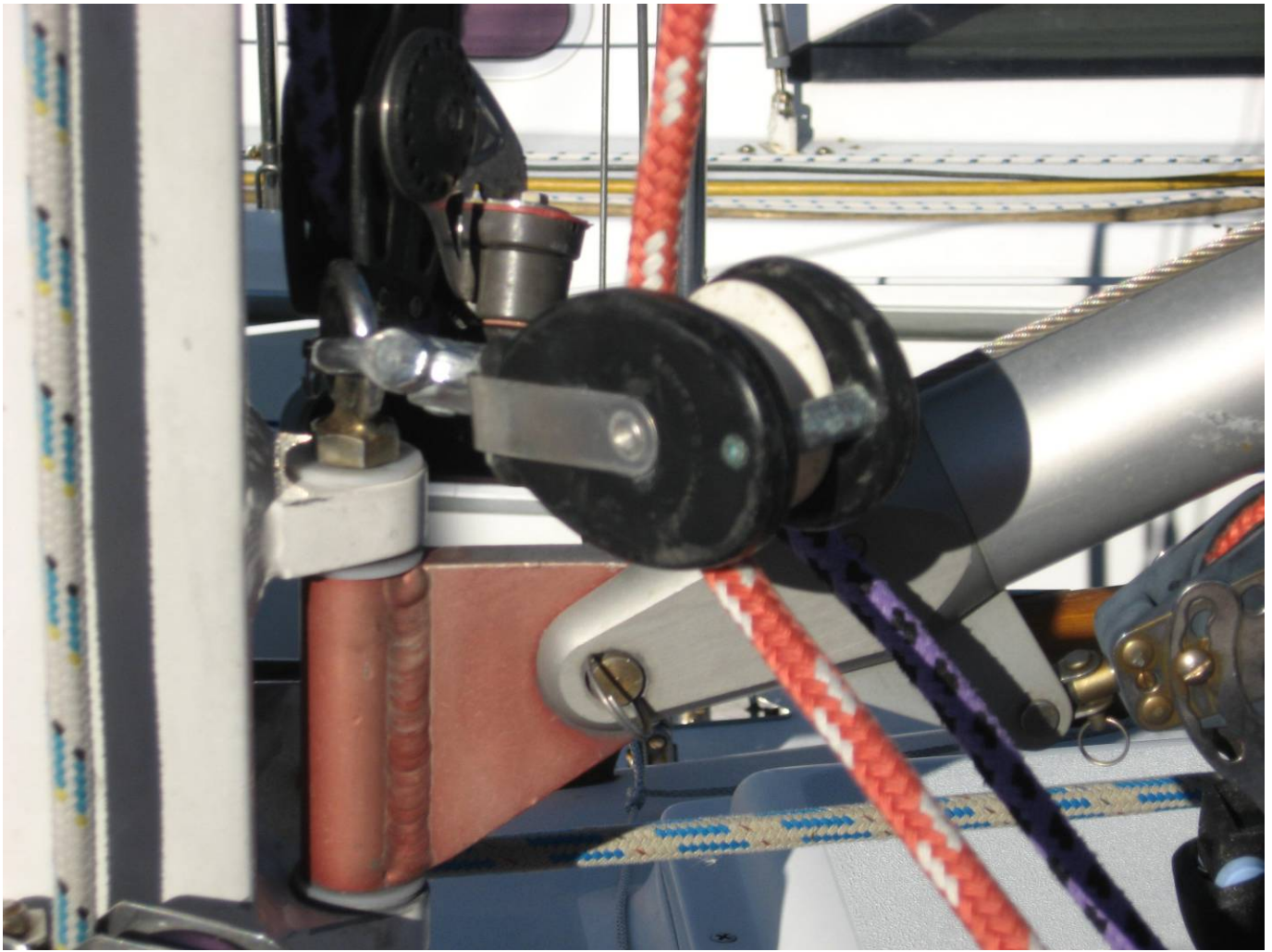


These slides are molded from self lubricating type of plastic rather than nylon, they are taller than “normal” slides and have a flange on the face that makes there “slippery-ness” factor better than the ones on the sail we used. They are a bit more expensive but worth it in my estimation, at least for this kind of sailing.

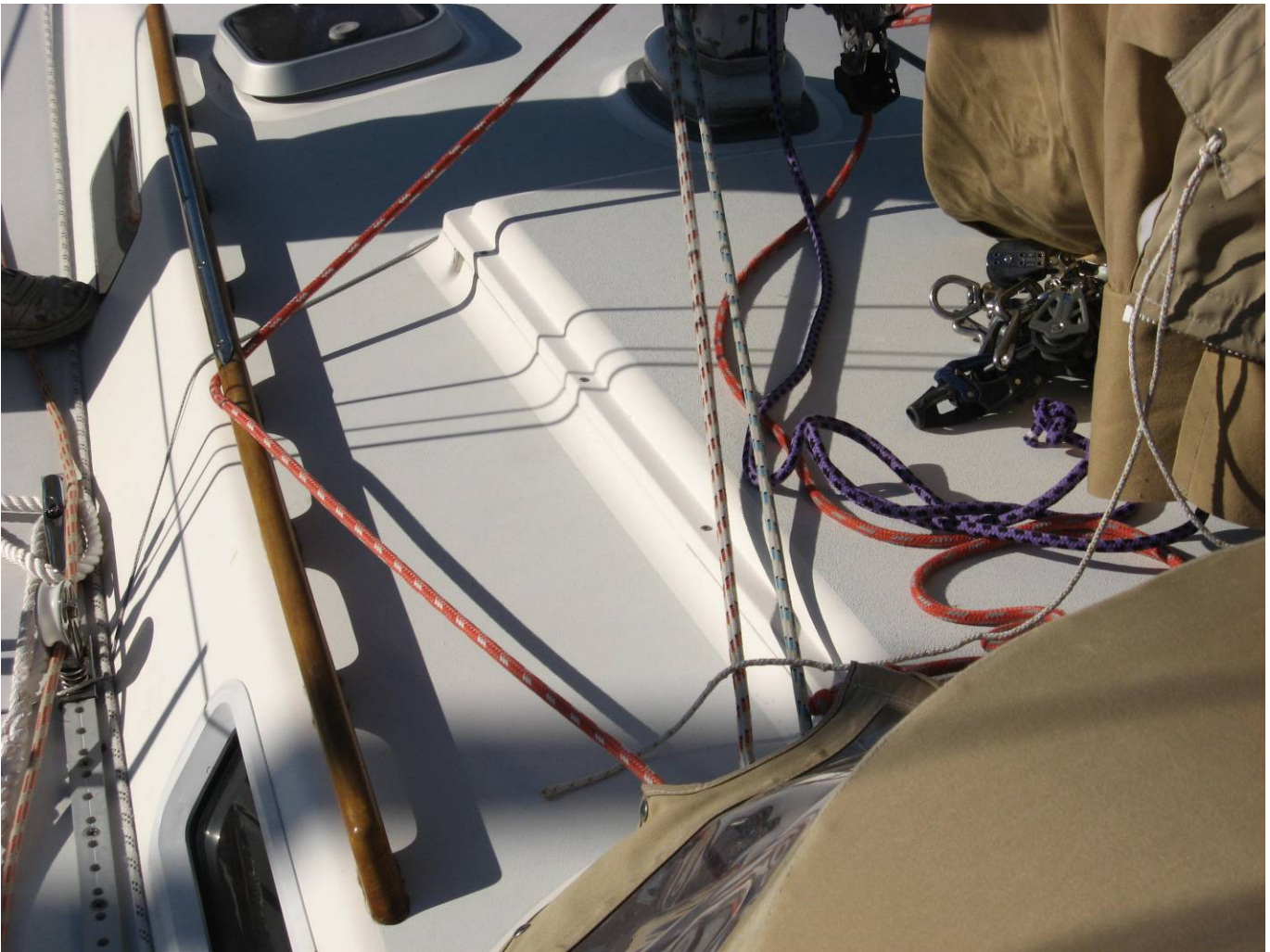
Reefing the mainsail:

This was of course certainly do-able but was not quite as simple as it might have been, for DH sailing, because of the day sailing/OD nature of the way the boats are mainly used.

a) There is no fair lead easily available to get the reef line back to the winch. We used a snatch block on top of the bottom Vang fitting, like this:



then led the reef line under the hand rail

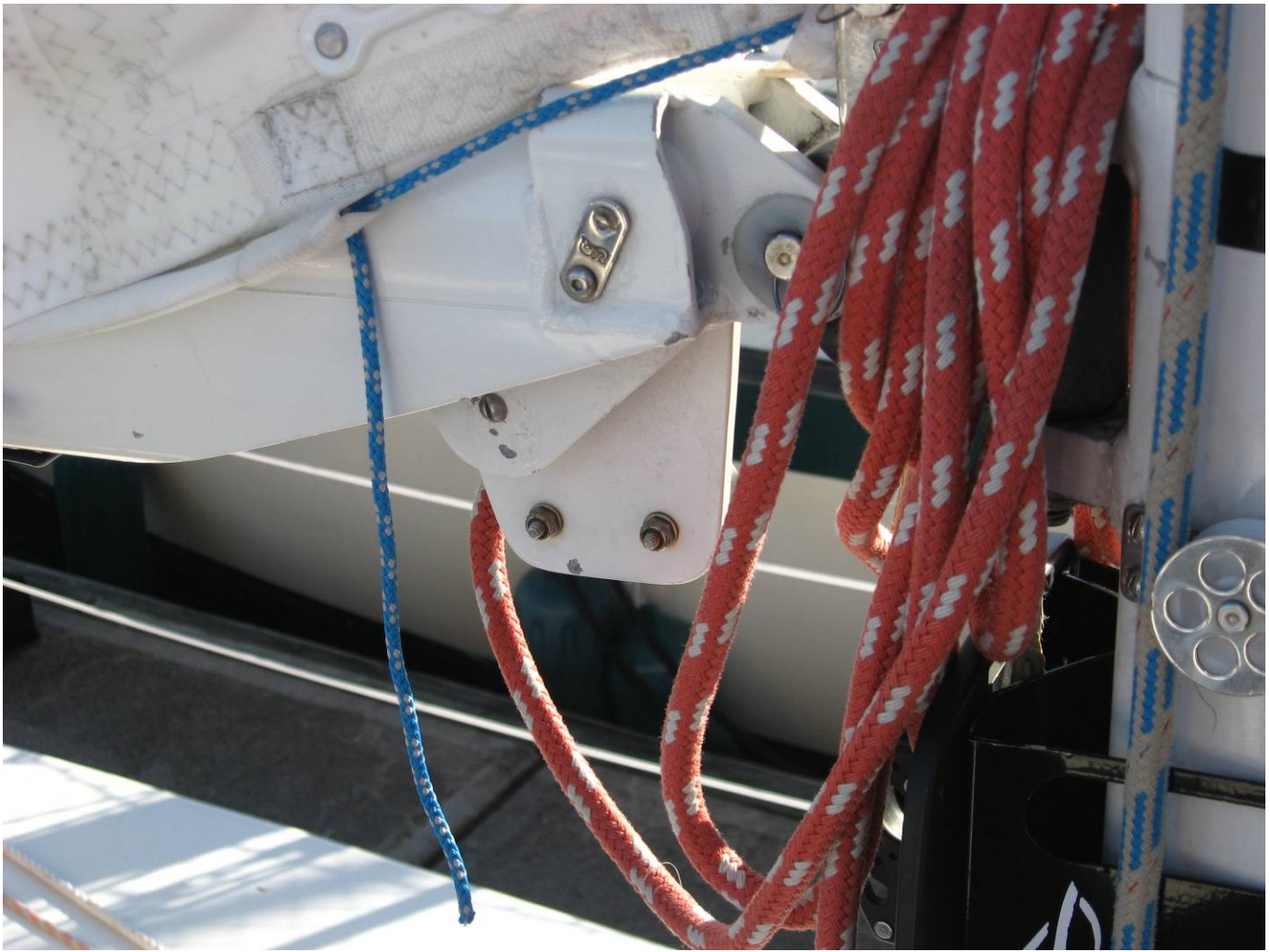


(which in Jaded is of stainless steel, but on Dark & Stormy is timber). In this latter case one might just as easily lash a block to the rail with light line or webbing to protect the varnish. The reef line was then led then aft to the winch. This deflection out to the hand rail (absent a pad eye at the mast base) is important so the line will not over ride on the winch, as the lead direct from the vang fitting would have let happen. There is a Cam cleat on the boom for the first reef, (which exits on the port side of the boom)



but nothing for locking off the reef line for the 2nd reef. Fortunately we did not need to use the stbd winch for the duration of the time the 2nd reef was in. The reef line was led the same way as for the first reef, around the hand rail.

Again if I was going to do a lot of this kind of sailing I would install a cam cleat on the opposite side, in this case the starboard side, of the web opposite its mate on the port side. You would use the same size cleat and longer bolts.



Rather than use the snatch block on the vang bale approach I would install a pair of pad eyes at the mast base and have appropriate blocks fastened to them. Having these small modifications would make reefing a whole lot easier.

Also I would put floppy rings on the luff reef grommets-this makes it easier to get the reef secured to the J hook at the gooseneck.



The Tack line:

This was simply run thru the stainless steel U bolt on the end of the sprit. This is OK for day racing but with the kite under load for several hours the line got pretty heavily chafed-I would put a block on the U bolt for this kind of racing. The line chafes as the sprit pumps up and down in the puffs.

Kite:

The class 89 meter kite was plenty big enough for this breeze. The ATN sock was just the ticket. In any breeze I would sock the kite to gybe and not risk disaster by trying to gybe the kite like with a full crew.

Jibs:

I think about this a lot and I know that the furler is standard and real easy to use for the majority of the time the way the boats are generally used, but if we had had a 3 on and the breeze had come on, it would have been really difficult to change to a 4, especially with the leech battens. If I was going to do a lot of this kind of sailing I would look long and hard at using hanks for the jib. I can think of several advantages: a) slightly larger sail. b) you can have the battens in the horizontal plane. c) You can have a reef in it-Reefs used to be put in headsails all the time before furlers were invented and in fact the Mini 650s have reefs in their jibs. d) All of this makes changing headsails a much easier proposition.

Thanks to Peter Rugg on Jaded & Mike Le Chance from Dark & Stormy. Mike has some video footage on YouTube here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggv1yv-MLqg&feature=related>
And there is his version of the race on this site: <http://www.brycesystems.com/2008results>