

Safety Workshop #1: Cold Weather Wet Re-Entry

Submitted by the Flying 15 Team

The Flying 15 Race and Cruise Team members have discussed the value of practising safety procedures, just to be prepared. Gail Bryn-Jones volunteered as our Safety Officer and began introducing impromptu safety demonstrations using gear from the safety bucket in each of the F15s. We know that young people learning to sail Optis and 420s start out by learning how to get back into their boats; watching our youth led us to plan the *2024 Cold Weather Wet Re-Entry Workshop* led by our Coach



John Hillier, held on November 24, 2024. John brought his Canadian Navy training as a Rescue Diver into action, professionally establishing the safety margins and support. Tony Meek and John Tulip were John's primary assistants, ready to help fish us gals out of the water if needed. Doug Manton ensured that Robyn Hood stayed in the dinghy dock area but away from the dock, for the purpose of this exercise.

Value of Practise

Jill Oakes jumped in first to demonstrate a solo re-entry. She explains, "Previous practises had already taught me the easiest way back into Robyn Hood—for me, it's grabbing onto the traveller, hoisting my upper body up onto the boat, getting one leg up and rolling in. Took just seconds. See the video here of my earlier practise"...



“Then I jumped back into the water; this time moving around to the stern, climbing back in by pulling myself up and across the stern. That position worked for me, took less upper body strength, and a crawl to get back into the boat. I was smiling, cold, wet and feeling great, having fun and game to try another technique, so jumped back in on the port side. John suggested that I come along the starboard side and re-enter using a section of the spinnaker sheet made into a stirrup. I had never tried that before and began by cleating the spinnaker sheet, trying to put my foot into a “stirrup”, but the sheet was three meters too long so it wrapped around my ankle. I tried to shorten the sheet by tying it to a cleat and then to the shroud, and I struggled to figure out a logical knot or attachment point, wrapping the line uselessly around a cleat and starting to feel concerned about being able to figure this out. John suggested putting it through the cleat backwards; I looked at the cleat unable to determine which way was front or back. I tried several times to pull myself up so I could reach into the boat and cleat or tie the spinnaker sheet to a different cleat.”



“My attempts were becoming futile and illogical. John hauled me out at that point. For this third experiment, I had been in the water for 4½ minutes and was beginning to have trouble thinking creatively; my muscles were losing effectiveness. If the boat had been moving forward, the spinnaker line tangled around my ankle would have been impossible to untangle. Good thing I have one of John’s diving knives on a lanyard in my pocket.”

Jane Squier observed, “It was really obvious when Jill started having trouble. The effectiveness of each of her attempts to develop and implement a new technique was significantly diminishing”.

To make the point, Jill says, “Huge thanks to John for safely demonstrating the importance of practising, as we might not have time on the spot to ‘imagineer’ a solution; and to Mysha Dewar-McClelland for weight-lifting with me twice a week so I’m strong enough to haul myself easily back into the boat quickly, while my muscles are still functioning.”

Value of Different F15s and Body Types

Kristi Norget and Jan Macpherson practised a wet re-entry using Ffoenix, which has higher freeboard than Robyn Hood. Kristi found it easier pulling herself up over the stern using the main sheet bridle with the boom down. Entering over the high side was unsuccessful, unless there was a person tipping the boat or helping from inside the boat.





Jan's body shape, her upper arm strength, and the added bulk of her survival suit (which is slimmer than a typical PDF) made it seemingly impossible to pull herself up over the high side. Jan moved to the rear corner of the boat, explaining, "Standing on the cleated spinnaker sheet allowed me to raise myself out of the water using my stronger leg muscles to push up sufficiently to grab the inside of the boat and haul myself up over the corner of the stern. It is so cool to know that I can get myself back in the boat...

unassisted. The water was not as cold as I had anticipated. It actually was a lot of fun and I had a great sense of accomplishment."

Jane Squier's long legs helped her get on board. Jane reflects, "The first time was from the side of the boat. I was concerned about my life jacket interfering. It was awkward but I managed to



swing my leg up onto the boat and then used the various ropes to pull myself up. When I tried from the stern, it was less of a struggle and faster. I pushed myself down into the water for the lifejacket buoyancy to help me pull myself onto the stern using the bridle. Then I wriggled the rest of my body on. Afterthought...has anyone tried to climb onto the stern of a boat like FireFox, Ffoenix or Fiddle D Dee where the bridle is connected to the boom and when the sail is raised? I imagine it would be difficult because of the bridle's height above the

deck, the moving sail, and the challenge of getting one's body past the bridle to reach inside the boat. For boats like Robyn Hood, having a permanent bridle-like line tied to the stern might be a good idea."

Re-Entry with Crew Onboard to Help

The Australian Flying 15s are set up for sailing with two people. Anne McKague had a very tentative hand up to volunteer if a crew member was on board to help. Anne explains, "Dread and trepidation...I typically linger at the water's edge, then creep in screaming like a girl. I'm so glad I took the cold plunge...I wore wool underwear over synthetic underwear



under snow pants. Getting my chest with the added thickness of my lifejacket over the side of the boat was challenging. Thankfully a crew member (John Tulip) pulled me in. I'm game to try it again and again. And yes, I'm grateful to Jill for the prod/push opportunity."

Summary

Kelly-Ann Haslauer works as a nurse; John assigned her to help each of us get dried off, warmed up and dressed in our dry clothes. Kelly-Ann's recommendations are as follows:

1. Be prepared. Thinking about HOW to get back into the boat before you NEED to will save valuable time in the water. For example, figure out which lines you can make into a stirrup that won't loosen.
2. Use your crew. So much easier if one side of the boat is lower in the water by moving all the weight onto one side. Even if your crew didn't have the ability to help due to lack of strength or incapacity, getting back in on your own would be a lot easier if you entered on the same side as your crew.
3. Practise, practise, practise. (I'd like to try in the warmer months.) Keep repeating to reinforce learning.

Acknowledgements and Reference

Thank you so much to Wendy Vine for sharing the invitation to join, and to everyone who participated by watching, doing the exercise, or providing the support; you made this event a success. It was a lot of fun and a most worthwhile learning experience under John Hillier's leadership. Thank you!

If you'd like to refresh your knowledge or are curious to learn more about the three phases of cold water survival, check out https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZtAM5ZTn4k

Keep a look out for our next SISC Safety Workshop—large and small boat sailors, cruising and racing sailors, our families and frequent sailing guests are welcome to join the fun.

Watch for more photos of the participants and the workshop on our Flickr page (Club Photos link on the Club's homepage <https://www.saltspringsailing.ca/>).