

Match Racing – Prestarts

Winning the Left Side...

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Here are some ideas for the situation where you want to start to the left of your opponent, because the left is favored or the Pin is favored or you want to start Close to Leeward and force your opponent to tack away soon after the start.

- 1) Know where the downspeed Pin layline is –

Most do a good job getting the Pin layline before the start, but most do it at full speed; i.e., they get the VMG Pin layline. In fact, when you are fighting for the Pin you are usually downspeed for some time. That of course means you slip sideways more, and you lose further distance to leeward when you put your bow down to accelerate to start.

Therefore, the key is to get the “downspeed Pin layline”, which will be anywhere from ½ to 2 lengths above the VMG layline depending on:

- a) the breeze strength
- b) flat water or waves
- c) how far below the starting line you are
- d) how long you will need to be hanging before you can pull the trigger and start

Know how far below the RC Boat the Pin layline is. The more favored (upwind) the Pin is, the closer the Pin layline will be to the RC Boat. This is a critical piece of information as you approach the RC Boat as the Leader or the Pusher.

- 2) In the Middle Phase, do your time and distance calculations to the Pin. For instance if you are 1:00 from the Pin at 2:00, that is a 2:1 ratio, which you may choose to take for the Lead in lighter wind, but not in medium or heavy wind.
- 3) Kill time and distance early – The longer you wait to kill time, the harder it gets. If leading, try to get the game down to the Pin layline early so you are leading more close-hauled, which makes it tougher for the Pusher to push, and makes it easier to kill time.
- 4) “Ask the Question” when appropriate –

This is the biggest key right here. When you are Leading and know you are early, draw the Pusher in as close as possible, and when 2/3 of the way down the line, go abruptly head to wind. This will force the Pusher to decide which side of you to go. In other words, by stopping, you are asking your opponent “which side of me do you want?” If they take the right side, then by stopping 2/3 of the way down, you still have room to hang and then bear away and win the Pin. If they go to your left, perhaps they will be too early themselves. Then you can decide to either “luff and linger” (see the Playbook, Final Approach) and keep them in drama if they are in danger of sliding below the Pin layline. Or you can tack out, build speed, and then tack back so you can start to windward of them near the favored end (so they don’t gain an advantage on you) and at speed so you can then tack to port and be on the right of them. Then if the left is favored, just go a speed-build on port and tack.

The single biggest mistake early Leaders make is they fight too long and too hard for the Pin, making it easy for the Pusher to decide what to do (usually just stay to their right and keep the Leader in drama).

Obviously, the best defense for the Pusher, when the Leader is early, is to hang back and *not* overlap the Leader until it is necessary or appropriate to win the start.