

Report from George Lucas, edited by Peter Drinkwater

BSA Sanctioned Jib Club Experiment at Card Sound Sailing Club, Key Largo, FL 3/25/2023

Reason for the experiment and background

Request by CSSC to have in the NOR and SI of the next Nationals hosted at CSSC that use of jib wishbone jib clubs be optional. This was rejected by the Exec Committee for the change not having been first sent to the Tech Comm with Experiment and also not fitting for our “one-design class.”

We received OK from Tech Comm for this Experiment with requested format. We had representatives from CSSC, BYC, FIYC, and WHYC for these tests.

The alternate to using the club is currently used by most of the fleet at CSSC and WHYC. It is what we call “direct trimming” or DT which does not meet the BSA rules but has been approved by our fleets for local racing by popular demand. These two fleets totaling over 40 boats seem happy to give skippers the option to choose their jib rigs and both rigs sail together.

Description of Direct Trimming (DT)

The center of the jib sheet is knotted into the jib clew (or two separate shorter sheets knotted). The sheet is led directly through a turning block located on the cuddy top then led to the cam cleats in the traditional locations. In some cases, that turning block is the same one that has been used with the club to lead sheet to the jam-cleats. In other cases, the turning block is on a track on the cuddy top. In that case, we find the top skippers rarely move the jib-block on the track that questions the need for a track.

The Experiment

To seek the difference in performance between both rigs, we used two methods: (1) a short series of three windward races involving both clubs and DT in same races, and (2) a series of “line-ups.”

The races had our expert skippers on all boats, four with clubs and four with DT. The start line was set as square as possible, no chutes, finish at the windward mark - all these exceptions were made to focus on the effects of the jib rigs.

We added line-ups in the “standard way,” as advised, to test sails in pairs, or threes, starting upwind evenly matched with several boat-lengths apart for clear air. Racers sailed evenly until one boat pulled ahead or dropped back – we noted the “winner,” and then boats got even again and repeated, then we followed them on opposite tack, etc. This reduced the variables of fleet racing.

Joan Tiffany (BYC), “We sailed both days without a club and saw no appreciable difference club or no club. The experiment seemed to point toward personal preference including ease in setting a spinnaker without the club or conversely ease in going to windward with a club.”

To have the biggest fleets and most happy owners, why not allow the local fleets to manage this jib club issue?

As to those that resist change based on the term “one-design class,” all successful one-design classes have evolved with minor changes to the hardware and sail handling. When looking at the 500 photos taken for this experiment, it was most often hard to tell which had clubs without checking the sail numbers. Our Judge Dooie Isdale who was very near the boats, pointed this same likeness out. The mainsail trimming now has evolved with different travelers and sheeting from the aft deck, the head knockers, and the block on floor or pedestal. All creating slightly different sail shapes, and all favorites of different skippers. Use of the jib club could be part of that same evolution and the Bullseye would still be One-Design.

A good final note to the report is a quote from a participant Ed Tiffany (BYC), “I think Friday showed that the better sailor going the right way won respective of the rig.”