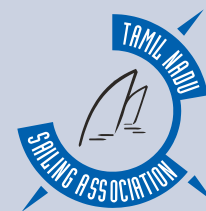


# TN SAILS

The monthly newsletter of Tamil Nadu Sailing Association



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Regd. Office :

No. 57, Arathoon Road,  
Royapuram, Chennai - 600 013.

Tamil Nadu, India

Tel. : 044 - 2538 2253

Email : tansail@gmail.com

web : www.tnsa.in

Edited by

**Dr. Mushtaqh Ali**

**Mrs. Shantha Ravikumar**

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## Qingdao International Optimist Regatta 2011



Opening ceremony at Qingdao

The Qingdao International Optimist Regatta was held from the 15th to 24th of August by the Qingdao Sailing Association. A huge fleet of 450 sailors from 17 countries participated in this event. As part of our sailing development plan, a mid-fleet team of 10 young sailors were selected to participate in the Qingdao International Optimist Regatta this year. The Indian team of 8 boys and 2 girls were accompanied by Umesh N as Coach and Optimum Sakina Mustafa from TNSA as manager. Five of the boys and 1 girl were from TNSA, making 60 percent of the Indian contingent.



Team India at Qingdao

### Sakina reports:

The Qingdao Regatta 2011 began with great hopes and fervour from the moment we left India. Our journey was for nearly 40 hours full of adventure and the children were extremely helpful and understanding every step of the way. Umesh and I had many nervous moments all through the 12 days, but the kids never let us feel their anxieties.

Our accommodation was at the Qingdao Middle School. This was one big township in itself and the International guests had a separate dormitory and separate kitchen. Teams from Macau, Singapore, Malaysia, Germany, Russia, and Pakistan all lived in the same building along with the PRO, coaches, managers and parents. We had a bus pick up and drop every morning and evening. The sailing centre was in the Olympic Sailing Village which in itself was an honour for all sailors. The organizers had arranged visits to the Sailing Museum, Ocean World and had colourful opening and closing ceremonies that showcased Chinese art and culture.

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## On the Western Front

Two of our sailors Janaki and Mahesh Balachander spent practically a month in UK, taking part in the UK Nationals and the Irish Nationals. These two sailors and their parents are so committed to the sport that they have pulled out of school in favour of home schooling so that they can concentrate on their sailing. The UK Optimist National and Open Championship was held at Pwllheli from July 30th to Aug 5th, while the Irish Nationals were held from Aug 16th to 20th at Howth, Dublin.



*A sea of sails*

Their mother **Usha Balachander** writes about their experience:

We departed on July 27, 2011 and arrived at London on the same afternoon around 3:30 PM. After finishing all our customs & the usual clearance we came out of our terminal and after a never ending journey by tube and train we at last arrived at our final destination Pwllheli (pronounced Pootheli) in Wales around 11:30 am. But we enjoyed every bit of our journey, mesmerized by the greenery of the landscape all throughout from the suburb of London to Pwllheli, Wales.

Pwllheli is the unofficial capital of The Llyn Peninsula, in Northwest Wales. Thomas Chaix, the Irish coach and motivating man behind our entire UK & Ireland championship came to pick us up at the station & took us to a B & B place just 2 minutes drive from the Station. We soon took possession of our equipment which was all properly packed, covered & neatly arranged in the Pwllheli sailing club parking lot. Pwllheli sailing club is a wonderful place where sailing is done for the fun of it. People came in cars with Optis on trailers at the back and some tubing system where you can hook the sail. Caravan in the parking lot, huge yachts, ribs all were parked in an orderly manner. I learnt a lot and had a different perspective towards sailing now. You sail for just the pleasure of it, winning comes later! Everything happened at the right time in an orderly and structured manner. It was great!

The measurement was on July 30, 2011 and the opening ceremony and the practice race were on the following day. The

races started on the 1st of Aug with very light winds which picked up during the regatta to go up to 10 to 12 knots and finished on the 5th with sunshine but challenging conditions and 30-40 degree shifts.



*At the racing venue*

Totally there were 455 sailors from UK, Wales, Ireland, France, New Zealand, USA, Kenya, UAE, Spain, Bermuda, Finland, Russia, Australia, Netherlands, Hongkong and India. Twelve races were conducted with 2 discards. Water was very cold & Mahesh told me that he had experienced Antarctica in Wales so no need to go there. Thomas Chaix provided the sailing gear from his team but in spite of that, the kids had difficulty sailing in Pwllheli water.



*Mahesh all bundled up on the water*

We initially stayed in a B & B place for couple of days and then we switched to a caravan where we could cook on our own but were far away from the venue. We shared the caravan with Thomas' Assistant Coach Ross, who was just entering into college. He drove us to and from the venue and even helped with the dishes while I cooked! I met many nice people & Ross was among the nicest and our kids would do well to emulate him. We went to the club early & got back late but we did explore sailing in a different dimension from food, weather, sailing, coaching, racing and it was an amazing experience overall!

*Continued to page 6*

# Sailing, Intellect, Education.....Educators

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## An Analysis



*Pete Conway, India's coach from UK*

If we should pause to look at sailing as a leisure pursuit, we find that it is a skilled hobby. The wind must be understood, and how to rig and maintain the boat to deal with a variety of wind, sea and weather conditions. On the boat are many controls, which must be set roughly correctly if we are to enjoy our sailing with some fun and comfort, and not get into "survival mode" which triggers fear, and sometimes panic within all the occupants of the boat - this in turn will detract from the pleasure that sailing brings.

We go upwind, across the wind and downwind. Each way, or point of sailing, has its own sub sets of skills which must be mastered in order to enjoy sailing to the maximum. A good sailor will be able to sail within their own, and the boat's limits on each point in order to gain this extreme and often sensual enjoyment.

When we race a boat the limit is being pushed the whole time. All sports become more competitive (push the limits further) as they mature, and sailing is a very mature sport. The growth of sailing in the west has ensured that technical skills have been pushed right up, and also tactical skills are improving the whole time.

In the field of racing we may therefore surmise that within technical skills in sailing there are several skill sets dependent on point of sailing, wind conditions and sea conditions. Within tactical sailing there are almost an infinite number of combinations of wind nature, strength, angle considerations, pressure considerations, meteorological phenomena and mathematical probabilities which have to be considered to achieve the "perfect" result.

Another important aspect to consider is that a regatta is a combined score of several races. There is therefore a mathematical need to avoid high scores in order to do well, or win. Whilst this may be stating the obvious, the consequence of this form of the sport is that we have to bring in some risk

management skills, so that in the heat of competition the overall position in the regatta may have a bearing on the degree of risk we are likely to accept at any moment in order to gain points. These risk factors vary throughout the regatta, and change dependent on the results of the previous races. Other sailors results are taken into account within our own decision making process.

Sailing sounds very complex to achieve a high level. Not only does it sound complex - it IS complex.

## Finding Solutions

Currently the human mind has not evolved to a high enough level where we can feed all the data needed to sail perfectly into our brains and come up with the correct answer every time. No one does it, even the sailing heroes who all get beaten sometimes in individual races, even if they still win most regattas.

Having identified Technique, tactics and risk management as essential skills to become winners, we may also add fitness and strength, which becomes another set of qualities that are increasingly necessary to succeed in our sport.

So we have a sport which in no way can be compared to ice dancing, running or field sports. Within these sports the perfecting of standard actions which seldom change by a great deal is the goal of all participants. In sailing we have a different combination of required talents and skill sets which range from pure strength to mathematical calculation (probabilities, angles and additions) through to feel of speed, reaction to that feel, understanding of aerodynamics, hydrodynamics and management of ever constant and often unpredictable change.

How do we deal with this overload of demands that our sport brings in competition?

The answer is that we prioritise the skills that we need to bear onto the set of challenges, so hopefully we "win" the most important battles against the elements in a more convincing manner than our opposition. If we prioritise the correct aspects we make the highest gains.

## Preparing to be The Best

With the complex skills and talents required to achieve success in sailing, we have to look for talented individuals who can deal with a wide range of tasks simultaneously. From this angle research shows the female brain to have advantages over the male brain, which is an interesting observation and may explain some unpredictable female successes in sailing. We also need strength, agility and physical coordination.

Having established the ability of the potential sailor to multi task, we must then put into place skill sets which build towards success. The core of these skill sets is simply to make the boat go fast. Failure to do this means there is no chance

of success, so this is relatively easy to prioritise. Within this we have to figure out how a boat works with the crew weight and fitness that is sailing it, and how it responds to changes. We then spend hours drilling these responses and different wind/sea state techniques.

Tactically we must sail in practise races and regattas to improve and gain education and experience, but it is essential to have an experienced and perceptive coach who can spot critical moments in the race which offer opportunities for improvement. For example the standard “low level” coach will always blame a poor start for a poor race - they do not know that the reason is not a poor start - it is the incorrect solution for the poor position in which a sailor finds themselves after a poor start that can kill a race. Identifying the wrong priority is certain to handicap the sailor in the future. As it is impossible to get a good start in every race, knowledge of how to minimise losses is of paramount importance to winning regattas. The tools to escape a poor position are more critical than the tools to succeed.

Experience and intellectual abilities give us the solutions to the risk business, and in this field a good coach who is on the ball will help. Developing fitness and strength is the only predictable part of sailing, where we may set specific goals and evaluate them accurately.

### Instructing Sailing

A sailing instructor is a person who deals with teaching conventional technique to most levels of sailors. At the beginner phase the instructor is instrumental in forming habits (often lifelong) and making the sailor “feel” the boat. As the sailor progresses the instructor will show them more advanced techniques which make the boat go faster.

Let’s look for the moment at how this is done in simple terms. It is vital to keep the boat from capsizing in order to enjoy going sailing and to develop skills. We prevent the boat from a capsize by pulling or releasing the mainsheet, and pulling or pushing the tiller. Because it is difficult to coordinate the mainsheet actions and the tiller actions most instructors find that students survive better by not moving the mainsheet but by pulling and pushing the tiller in a rapid manner. This method of instruction is used in many nations, and leads to poor understanding of fast sailing. I will go into those details in a subsequent article.

I have identified this habit of undue tiller movement and frozen body movements as being a primary reason why our senior sailors are so poor on an international stage. It is likely, that because it is a universal challenge throughout to the Indian sailors who race, that this deep flaw is a product of the survival skills which are so prevalent at the beginner stage. Looking at tell tails and steering to them is an important skill to develop. This skill is also spectacularly missing from most of our top seniors and is also essential to success.

So we can surmise that good basic instruction forms a base which can be built upon. Poor basic instruction limits growth and gives no continuity or opportunity to progress to the top.

Consider the effects on a cruising boat too - the discomfort and lack of speed in a forward direction are also limits of enjoyment!

So the initial instruction in most sports forms some lifelong habits. Most instructors (“teachers”) form the bond of friendship, mentor and even hero to their pupils, because there are odd psychological effects of the student’s admiration for their teacher, who also happens to be their “protector”, “guardian” and therefore become a definite authority figure in what seems to the student a hazardous environment.

### Teaching Skills

As the teacher - guardian of students in an unfamiliar and sometimes hazardous environment an instructor requires to be suitably qualified (to the level at which they are teaching) in:

Safety, a teaching syllabus (one laid out by the federation scheme), communication skills, creating a learning environment for a group so that the group “feed” off each other. There are many other instructor qualities which may be present, but the instructor needs to keep to a syllabus of teaching skill sets within a pre-defined system.

### Coaching Sailing

There are many coaching skills which are shared between sports of all nature. The simplicity of a sport like running where there is a predictable distance with predictable actions is obviously going to involve a different approach to coaching our sport. However, the basic job of a coach is the same in all sports. The complexity of sailing makes coaching our sport special for these reasons:

The job of a coach is to:

Observe

Analyse the observations

Prioritise the observations into an order where the most important flaw that will give the best improvement of results, OR the best improvement of technique, is identified.

Plan the remedial action necessary to improve the skill(s) selected as the biggest priorities.

Execute the plan by coaching (in this case meaning advanced teaching of skills) on the water. Note: this is the “visible” part of coaching

Observe the results of the plan, usually under competition conditions.

The “execution” of the plan is what most people understand the coach to do, or perceive his job to be. However, without the rest of the process being carried out, the coach is merely an advanced teacher, and nowhere near a professional coach.

The pace of the plan may be critical to the process and / or the outcome, so preparing in a few weeks to race would require far different prioritisation than preparing over a few months or years, when the priorities can be technical solidity which in turn reduces risk.

## Coaching Skills

Observing the weaknesses (and strengths) of a sailor give the coach a picture of what is required to succeed, and also maybe whether the sailor can succeed or is likely to in the allotted time.

Unless the coach has a good knowledge of sailing and racing they cannot expect to be able to prioritise the skills which require working on - let's repeat the low skill coach and the starting observations - he will look at a poor sailor and says "we have to work on starting, because you can't start like the good sailors". In fact, so much is obvious to anyone, but the usual reason most sailors can't start at an early stage of their racing career is because they do not understand what makes the boat move fast, and the prioritisation of start is as crazy as saying to the driver of a Tata that his car needs tuning because a Mercedes beat him in acceleration. Prioritising the skill sets to be worked on is a key to successful coaching, which is in itself simply a way of accelerating the learning process and removing risk from it. More critically, the coach should instruct the sailor about what to do AFTER a bad start, which will give the sailor the maximum possible gain, and cut their losses. Good starting that can be turned into good racing takes years to develop, yet Opti kids of all nations spend disproportionate amounts of time honing this skill - time which would be better spent learning to move faster and more wisely.

Planning is a skill that many of us develop with maturity and if we are of a logical mindset. The ability to be realistic in our expectations within a timescale is a key to successful planning (and one that the SAI are maybe in need of recognising!). The elements of a plan must have fixed goals, and the plan must reflect these goals on a realistic timescale, or it will not work.

The execution of the plan is the visible part of coaching work. How you deal with the instruction side of the job may heavily influence your own success, as this is the element of the job that people may judge, even if you are working to a wrong plan. The sailor contact in this sector of the job promotes similar challenges to instructing, but is based on a more equal position of the student and teacher (or sometimes guru / student!).....

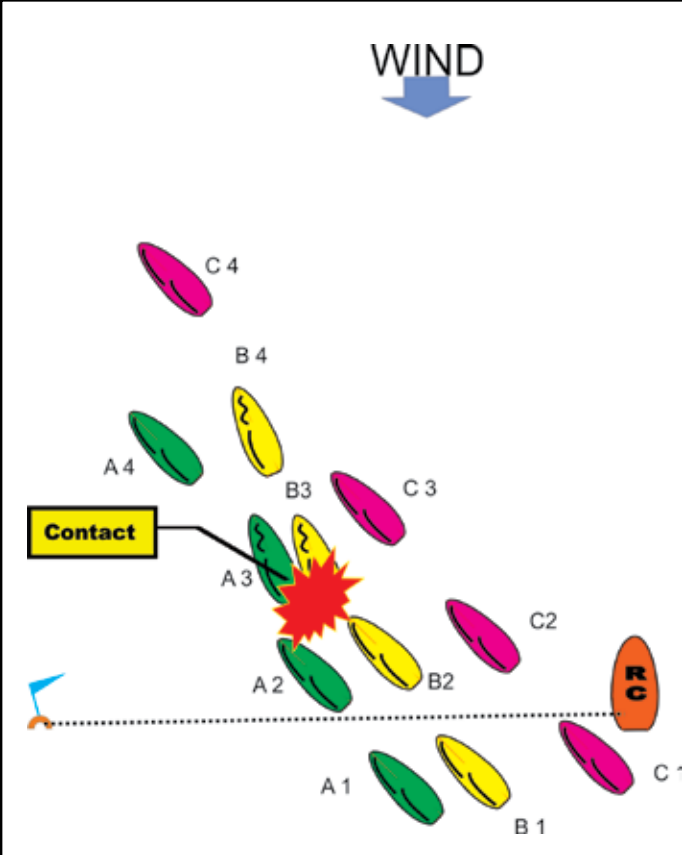
The evaluation of the success or otherwise of the plan must be realistic to a precise (and sometimes brutal) degree. Only in this way do we compare our current skill levels with the best - with what is needed to win.

So coaching skills include: Observation; sports specific knowledge appropriate to the level of sailor being coached; analytical skills; planning skills; management of change; project management; risk management; communication skills; psychological knowledge; physiological knowledge. The range of skills within each of these sets grows with the breadth and achievement level of sailors that are being coached. Further to this, squad coaching may involve different skill sets to the technical ones required to coach a one or two boat campaign.

## Summary

Although there are definitely common skills between coaching and instructing, there are many more skills required to be a top level coach than a top level instructor. This in no way devalues the nature of the top level instructor, who in their own field may become a guru - it simply demonstrates that our complex sport when correctly developed requires educators with different skill sets in order for us to grow successfully, and it also requires coordination between the coaching scheme and the instructor scheme.

-Pete Conway



The diagram illustrates a sailing race start. At the top, a blue arrow labeled 'WIND' points downwards. A horizontal dashed line represents the starting line, with a blue flag on the left and an orange buoy labeled 'R C' on the right. Three boats, A, B, and C, are shown in various positions. Boat A is green, Boat B is yellow, and Boat C is pink. They are arranged in a staggered line from A1 to C4. A red starburst labeled 'Contact' is shown between Boat A3 and Boat B3. A yellow box labeled 'Contact' has a line pointing to this starburst.

Five seconds after the start, three boats on starboard were heading off to the windward mark as shown in position 1.

Boat B was in between A and C with C to her windward and A to her leeward.

As all three boats proceeded, A luffed causing B to make contact with A. A protested breach of rule 11 and hailed protest.

B did not do a penalty claiming that C was to her windward and A had altered course that resulted in the contact, and protested A under rule 16.1.

What should the protest committee do?

Answer Next Page

# India International Regatta 2011



*Optis racing in IIR 2010*

As monsoon clouds hover over the Chennai horizon and most head indoors seeking shelter, an adventurous few go out to meet the elements head on! Sailors as young as eight years brave the wind and the waves in a bid to bring glory to India; yes, the third edition of IIR is upon us and exciting times are ahead. Organized by the Yachting Association of India (YAI), hosted

by the Tamil Nadu Sailing Association (TNSA) and conducted by Chennai Sailing Academy (CSA), the India International Regatta (IIR) is scheduled to be held in the Bay of Bengal off the Chennai Port from 2nd to 9th October, 2011. The registration and measurement will be on the 2nd, inauguration and practice race on the 3rd and the regatta races from the 4th to 7th to conclude with a valedictory function on the 8th. Volvo Group continues to be our title sponsor while Raymond Limited comes in for the first time as a Gold sponsor along with Gamesa who was associated with the IIR 2010 as well. Tissot and Coca Cola are other sponsors from last year. Taj Club House will host the international teams and TNSA is grateful for the renewed support of the Chennai Port Trust, Indian Navy and Coast Guard.

## ...Qingdao International Optimist Regatta 2011



*Intense concentration at briefing*

The host fleet was all young trainees but the training was not too helpful for our kids as the coach spoke Chinese and all the English speaking children were confused. There were totally 450 sailors in the camp. The international sailors sailed a separate course by themselves and there were 29 girls and 68 boys who were divided further into

2 fleets based on their ODD and EVEN sail numbers with 33 in the gold and 39 in the silver fleet. The organizers provided all the equipment that included sails and sail ties too. It was all well arranged and not a single boat had any issues. Throughout the regatta the winds varied from 2-7 knots and it was very hot and humid. Totally seven races were held and our sailors did quite well considering they are very young and this is the first time for most of them. The experience and exposure they have gained will definitely have an impact on their performance in the next regattas they participate whether national or international. With daily rigging and unrigging without any help, they have learnt to be self-reliant. The top 8 sailors were given prizes and the girls Ramya Saravanan and Zahabiya Mustafa finished 4th and 7th. The boys too did well to finish within the top half of the fleet.

## ...On the Western Front



*Janaki seems happier with the conditions*

Totally 12 races were conducted There were 71 sailors in the Senior Gold and 72 in the Silver fleet. Janaki qualified in the Silver Senior fleet and finished 23 out of

72 participants. She finished 86 among 143 sailors in the final. Among the juniors there were 74 sailors in the Gold and 73 in the Silver fleet. Mahesh qualified in the Gold Junior fleet and finished 64 out of 74 participants in the final.

Our next destination was Howth, in Dublin, Ireland for the Irish Nationals held from Aug 16th to 20th. This event was attended by 152 sailors, 66 in the senior and 86 in the junior fleet. Twelve races were held and Janaki finished at 55th position among the seniors while Mahesh finished mid fleet among the juniors at 44th overall and 3rd among the 10 year olds.

## Bonne Bouche



Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.

If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.

War does not determine who is right - only who is left.

Knowledge is knowing that tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

I thought I wanted a career. Turns out I just wanted paychecks.

A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory.

I asked God for a bike, but I know God doesn't work that way. So I stole a bike and asked for forgiveness.

You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.

Money can't buy happiness, but it sure makes misery easier to live with.

You're never too old to learn something stupid.

Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.

When tempted to fight fire with fire, remember that the Fire Department usually uses water.

"Where there's a will, I want to be in it.

I haven't slept for ten days, because that would be too long.

I've had a perfectly wonderful evening, but this wasn't it.

## Quiz Answer

This case "depends" upon the facts found. If the Protest committee finds that B responded to A's luff promptly and was still unable to avoid the contact then A is in breach of RR 16.1 and should be disqualified. B should be exonerated under RR64.1(c).

If they find that B was tardy in responding to the luff then of course B has broken RR11 and should be the boat to be disqualified.

A Right of Way leeward boat must ensure that the boat keeping clear has enough room and responds under rule 11 attempting to keep clear. If she changes course she is constrained by her proper course by which definition it means: A course a boat would sail to finish as soon as possible in the absence of the other boats referred to in the rule using the term. A boat has no proper course before her starting signal.