

MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL DN ICE YACHT RACING ASSOCIATION

RUNNER TRACKS

MARCH 2026



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Cover Photo: The Gold Fleet pushes off at the 2026 North American Championship.
Photo by Rachel Bartel for @harken_inc



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COMMODORE'S REPORT

ROB HOLMAN US3705
LAMBERTVILLE, MICHIGAN, USA

As our ice sailing season begins to wind down, I want to take a moment to thank all of the volunteers who helped make the 2026 North American Championships and the U.S. Nationals such great events. Our sport simply would not be possible without the dedication and generosity of our volunteers. Please take a moment to personally thank those who contributed their time and effort to make these regattas successful.

For those who continue sailing during the summer months, I encourage you to talk with your warm-weather sailing friends about iceboating. Share your experiences and let them know how sailing in the winter can help sharpen their soft-water skills. If we can introduce more sailors to ice sailing and get them to try it, we may just hook a few and begin growing our membership again.

There were also a few proposals discussed at this year's Annual Meeting regarding the Specifications Rewrite. Please note that these proposals do not change the specifications but are intended to simplify and clarify them. When the time comes,

please watch for the ballot and be sure to cast your vote.

In addition, the class will soon be sending out a survey regarding how we should move forward with the North American Championships during years when the Gold Cup is not scheduled. Your input is important, so please take a few minutes to complete the survey and share your thoughts. All ideas are welcome.

Finally, I want to say that I truly believe we have one of the finest one-design classes in the world—and certainly some of the best sailors. Good luck to everyone during the off-season. Build, promote our sport, and keep the conversation about ice sailing going.

I look forward to seeing everyone back on the ice in December at the Western Challenge.

Think Ice!
Rob Holman IDNIYRA Commodore



Photo: Gretchen Dorian

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Photo: Sean R. Heavey



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PHOTO: ANNA SUSLOVA
2025 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

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2023

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World Championship 2nd | Karol Jablonski P-36
European Champion | Tomasz Zakrzewski P-55
Europeans | Robert Graczyk 3rd

2022

World Champion | Robert Graczyk P-31

SITTING ON A PROTEST COMMITTEE - WHAT DO I DO?

PROTEST HEARINGS AREN'T MYSTERIOUS – THEY'RE STRUCTURED, RULE-DRIVEN, AND RELY ON CLEAR THINKING FROM ORDINARY COMPETITORS.
BY WARREN NETHERCOTE KC3786

If you are called upon to serve on a Protest Committee at an iceboat regatta, what should you expect? What will you do?

At iceboat regattas we have stand-alone, volunteer (or in Europe, sometimes paid) Race Committees but we rarely appoint stand-alone Protest Committees. Instead, we generally draw Protest Committee members from regatta participants, even for the Gold Cup or a Continental Championship. This is quite different from soft water sailing where a Continental or World Championship would normally have a stand-alone Protest Committee made up of certified judges rather than peer competitors.

The regatta organizers will ask you to serve based on their belief that you have a good understanding of the National Iceboating Authority (NIA) rules. Saying "no, I don't want to sit on the Protest Committee" is acceptable; saying "no, I don't know the rules" is an implied admission that you shouldn't be on the racecourse!

Part V.A.1 of the NIA rules allows protests to be filed by three different 'people': "any competing yacht, the Race Committee or any member of the Committee, or a Judge." The 'person' who filed the protest is typically called the 'protestor.' The protestor may protest "any competing yacht or the Race Committee," either of which will be known as the 'protestee.' Protestor and protestee are the terms that will be used throughout this article.

What Does a Protest Committee Do?

A Protest Committee (PC) has several responsibilities at a protest hearing:

- First, the PC must decide if the protest is 'valid': does it meet the procedural requirements of the NIA rules and the sailing instructions? If not, the

protest committee should declare the protest 'invalid' and close the hearing. If the protest is found to be valid, the hearing proceeds.

- After validity is established, the PC must determine the facts: what happened? The protest will include the protestor's description of the incident, but the other party's (the 'protestee') description may differ. Witnesses may support one or the other or provide a yet different version. The PC needs to weigh the evidence and decide on a single consistent set of facts, which may or may not agree with the protestor's description.

- Once the facts are known, the PC can apply the NIA rules to the situation. In practice, there is sometimes interaction between this and the preceding responsibility. For example, if the situation is found to be a mark rounding incident in which NIA Rule 8 applies, the PC needs to ensure that its facts include the necessary details to allow proper application of Rule 8.

- Finally, having found facts and applied the NIA rules to them, the PC must decide if any rules were broken, and if so, what penalty is to be applied to what yacht. It is not just the protestee that risks disqualification in a protest hearing.

How Does a Protest Committee Do Its Job?

A Protest Committee typically has three members, with one being the Chair. None should be interested parties, that is, no one on the PC should stand to benefit from any possible result of the hearing. The Chair will lead the conduct of the protest hearing and the committee members' deliberations to arrive at a decision. Ideally, all members would have experience of Protest Committees, but one of the three members could be a competitor with no Protest Committee experience. This would provide an opportunity to expand the pool of future committee

member candidates.

In an ideal world, the Race Committee will have access to a photocopier and will provide a photocopy of the protest form for each PC member, the protestor, and the protestee. It is important that the protestee has access to the protest before the hearing to allow them to prepare a defense which may include finding witnesses to the incident.

Appendix V of the NIA Rules provides guidance for protest procedure, the highlights of which follow.

- First, some rights:
 - o The protestor and protestee have the right to be present throughout the presentation of evidence, and have the right to cross-examine after testimony
 - o A member of the Protest Committee may be a witness to the incident, but if that evidence is to be considered by the PC, the evidence must be given in the presence of the protestor and protestee and the judge/witness must be available for cross-examination.
- Now some process:
 - o The protestor will give their testimony first, followed by the protestee. It is tempting for the PC to question each one immediately after their testimony, but it is better to wait, since the PC's questions to the protestor may color subsequent testimony.
 - o The protestor and protestee may question each other, generally after both have testified. Questions from the PC should be held until after the parties' questions, since they may ask the same questions that you might have.
 - o The protestor and protestee may

call witnesses. The witnesses may be questioned by who called them and cross-examined by the other party and the PC. The PC may also call witnesses, who are also subject to questioning. Witnesses, except for a judge giving evidence, shall be excluded from the hearing, except when giving their evidence.

- Now for the decision:
 - o Having heard all evidence, the judges dismiss the parties from the room and decide and record the facts based on the testimony. If necessary the PC may recall the parties for further testimony or seek other witnesses.
 - o Having determined the facts, the judges then apply the rules to the situation and determine whether any rules were infringed.
 - o If rules were infringed, the judges then determine whether any yachts should be penalized according to NIA Rule V.B.2.
- Finally, the parties are recalled, and the results of the protest are read to them. The results also need to be reported to the Race Committee, either as 'no change,' 'award of redress to Yacht XXX' or yacht(s) XXX is/are penalized (generally disqualified).

Appendix V of the NIA Rules goes into greater details on protest procedure, but this overview gives you an idea of what you might expect as a new judge, or even a new protestor or protestee for that matter.

Sail fast, sail safe, and know the rules!

Warren Nethercote was a soft water judge for 30 odd years, finishing up as an International Judge, accredited by World Sailing, but now he is just a sailor, having fun.



WHY ICEBOATING?

WITH ROOTS IN THE FIRST DN GOLD CUP OVER 50 YEARS AGO, GORDY BOWERS DISTILLS A LIFETIME OF CHAMPIONSHIP EXPERIENCE INTO A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SPEED AND AWARENESS ON THE ICE. HE WROTE THIS ARTICLE FOR OUR JUNIOR SAILORS – AND THEIR PARENTS – TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO GIVE ICE SAILING A TRY.

The memories of winter iceboating are still vivid. I would like to share some of the joys and challenges of racing the DN. What makes ice sailing different from soft water sailing is the greater boat speeds and different equipment. There are, however, many similarities to summer racing, among which are AWARENESS of wind pressures on your sail and boat, EQUIPMENT, STARTING TECHNIQUE, BOAT HANDLING, and DN SET UP/TUNING.

EQUIPMENT:

I bought my DN from the Gougeon brothers – Meade and Jan – the best builders and champions from Bay City, Michigan. It came with one set of standard plate runners. Now, longer insert runners and snow runners are necessary to be competitive. The runner plank seemed the right flexibility for my weight. Today, some sailors use more plank bend or stiffness by sanding or adding fiberglass.

My mast had a medium stiffness fore and aft and sideways. I designed my sail luff curve and seam shapes to match the mast bend in medium winds. In winds below or above the ideal, we could change the mast bend by raising or lowering the halyard, raking the mast, adjusting the side stays, and mast rotation.

The DN rules require you to wear a helmet. I bought track shoes with cleats for fast starting, light blue and some yellow goggles, and also a face mask for cold weather. I used padded gloves with fingers for light air and chopper mittens for winds above ten miles per hour. We practiced leeward mark roundings so much that I made pants with hip padding to keep from getting hip bruising. I also

used a tight-fitting, full-length suit to reduce wind drag while racing. We would bring an extra jacket, pants, and warm boots to keep warm between races.

AWARENESS:

Always respect the much faster speed of ice sailing. Enjoy the moments of speed and excitement, but it all happens faster: the closing speeds between boats, the distance and angle to the layline, and the mark roundings. Practicing in different wind and ice conditions on a short one-hundred-yard windward-leeward course with only one or two boats will quickly improve your awareness and decision-making.

Awareness and feel for wind strength and pressure on the boat and sail are learned gradually. On the ice you cannot see the wind ripples coming across the water. Question yourself about wind strength. Are you underpowered or overpowered, and at what steering angle and sail trim?

When overpowered, the weather runner will lift off the ice more than three inches. Many racers respond by quickly heading up toward the wind to get the weather runner back on the ice. Always think of gaining speed first. So get to the next speed level: ease the mainsheet to control the angle of heel and let your boat accelerate. Then trim your mainsheet for a flatter sail and slowly point higher with the windward runner light on the ice. This is high-lift and low-drag sailing – higher and faster.

Downwind, first sail high and trim for speed. Experiment by heading down five degrees and see



if you are maintaining speed. If speed drops slightly, you are fast and low in velocity-made-good mode (VMG). However, if speed drops noticeably, head back up five degrees or more to go faster.

When sailing downwind, a strong gust will raise the plank. Some sailors panic, head down too fast, bang the weather runner on the ice, and slow down. A better response is to ease the mainsheet enough to control the hike, accelerate, trim, and head down. Sailing faster and lower is a narrow groove that requires total concentration. Sail too low and you can fall off the edge – lower and slower. To get back to VMG requires you to steer much higher for longer.

It's also important to know if you are accelerating or decelerating. When accelerating, feel increased wind pressure and runner vibration, and notice the ice surface is moving faster under the boat. The plank might also begin to lift. You should observe the mast side bend increasing. I look for the maximum mast side bend distance halfway down from the forestay intersection. When decelerating there is less wind pressure, runner vibration, and mast side bend. You should ease the mainsheet and head up to regain some speed in the new lighter wind. Efficient task orientation on the ice is the best teacher of feel for speed.

DN sailors should always be aware of ice conditions.

New ice is black and hard. Snow ice is softer. When the temperature gets just above freezing, a thin layer of water can form in places. At higher temperatures snow ice can quickly soften. Never go sailing without slowing down to look for dangerous pressure ridges, cracks, and holes. Safety is important for you, others, and the sport of iceboating.

When it snows, DN sailing can become more complicated. Snow depth over three inches, especially when crusty, can make racing dangerous. If there are occasional snow drifts and mostly clear ice, the fast sailors focus on making occasional small steering changes up or down to avoid the highest snow. Higher awareness can make for better decisions on equipment and wind, ice, and snow conditions.

STARTING TECHNIQUES:

To start fast, begin by pointing your boat about ten degrees down from head to wind with side stays tight and mainsheet trimmed tight enough so the main luff telltales are kicking up. Get low to sprint with your inside foot close to the hull and runner plank. Most of your weight should be on the outside foot, ready to dig in. Put the mainsheet in the tiller hand while your other hand grips the side stays.

When the starting flag drops, first push hard with

your tiller hand and back leg. Take many short steps until you are at top speed. Next head down and place the outside foot on the plank, swing the inside leg forward, and slide smoothly into the cockpit. For light wind, slide forward to promote some plank lift. In heavy winds, slide farther aft. If you head down just enough, the combination of the wind and your running effort will start to lift the weather runner two to three inches off the ice. When your boat has accelerated, trim the mainsheet hard and slowly point higher. On the other hand, if the weather runner lifts too much, push your body back and out while easing the sheet to get your plank back down.

The variables of wind, ice, and snow can slightly alter your starting technique. Only practice and more practice will teach you to start fast and have the freedom of a clean lane. Like summer sailing, it takes at least two practice starts to begin to be in sync with the conditions at the starting line.

BOAT HANDLING:

Iceboating handling techniques at DN speed are tacking, gybing, upwind mark rounding, and downwind mark rounding. Each manoeuvre has three phases: entry, turning, and exit.

Going into a tack, sail fast and begin to point. As you enter the turn, trim the mainsheet tight to maintain speed, which also pressures the leeward runner so it does not lose grip on the ice. Slide forward to grip under the boom. The sail should never luff.

Just after head to wind, quickly ease the sheet so that when the mast flops onto the new tack you have taken the downward pressure off the mast so it rotates easily. Now, at the exit phase, trim hard to bend the mast and accelerate at about ninety degrees from your old tack. Once you have speed, you can make tactical fleet and mode decisions – speed, VMG, or point.

When gybing at entry you will be going faster than when tacking, so a wider turning radius is usually necessary. Because the boat is lighter on the ice sailing downwind, turning too fast can cause the runners to lose grip, or you can even spin out in windy conditions. As you gybe from one tack to the other, slide forward, re-trim the main, and head back up slightly to accelerate. Once back in speed mode, head down incrementally to sail lower and faster.

When turning at the windward mark, it's essential to enter the turn at good speed. If you pinch and slow to round, you will not have the momentum to develop sail power and lift to round fast. If the boat hikes, just ease and slowly head down to get the weather runner close to the ice. Maintain a smooth and fast turning radius. Properly executed, the entry, turn, and exit will aim you fast down the first hundred yards or more. Don't be afraid to experiment to find the best modes – speed, VMG, and depth. Notice when the boats ahead are gybing on layline to get to the leeward mark. You are sailing faster than the wind and will be catching the puffs



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SET-UP AND TUNING:

With experience you will understand that wind, ice, and snow conditions are always changing. Learning when to change mast rake, sail height, side stay tension, and plank position can be rewarding when you apply the principles of overpowered and underpowered relative to your body weight.

When the wind is light, the ice is soft, and the snow deep, you are usually underpowered and need a deeper sail/mast shape combination. My weight was 160 pounds, about mid-range for DN sailors. I used the middle plank fore-and-aft position. Bigger sailors used the aft position. My set-up was forward mast rake, low sail height, and tight side stays. If the wind increased enough to hike occasionally, I would rake the mast aft and retighten the side stays.

When the wind was heavy I was overpowered, so I

tuned for a flatter sail/mast combination and used the forward plank position to get maximum hiking leverage for my weight. My set-up was aft rake to get block-to-block maximum mainsheeting, high sail position, and slightly looser side stays. If my mast was over-bending sideways I would lower the mainsail height. Lighter sailors use the overpowered configuration sooner. This four-variable set-up tuning system was successful for me long ago. Today, DN sailors have more options: runners, mast base positions, mast rotation, mast and plank flexibility, hull shapes, heavy air sails, and modern equipment. It's a great time to be sailing and racing. So get out there and do it!

A competitor since the first DN Gold Cup, Lake Minnetonka's Gordy Bowers continues to mentor and inspire sailors, including our Youth Sailing Director, Sam Bartel.

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NEW OFFICIAL PLANS FOR THE DN?

DN BUILDING PRACTICES HAVE CHANGED OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES. HAVE OUR OFFICIAL PLANS KEPT PACE? THIS PIECE EXPLORES WHETHER IT IS TIME TO RETHINK HOW WE DOCUMENT AND PRESENT THE WAY A MODERN DN IS BUILT.

BY WARREN NETHERCOTE KC3786

“Official Plans” have been published by the DN Class for many years. Plans provide a useful guide to builders, giving an example of how a DN could be built in compliance with class rules. How a DN *could* be built is an important caveat: other building techniques or arrangements have always been allowed, provided the Official Specifications were not infringed.

Until the early 1990s, the IDNIYRA Yearbook included plans drawn by Bill Sarns, but it was obvious that those plans were no longer representative of contemporary building practices. Hal Chamberlain (US 2346) then developed an updated set of plans that have appeared in the IDNIYRA Yearbook ever since. Is it time to do another update?

What has Changed?

When the DN first arrived on the scene it was expected that it would be home-built and in the 1940s, 50s, and even the 60s, well-equipped home workshops were the norm rather than the exception. The official plans reflect this, showing how every element of a DN could be manufactured, perhaps excepting the sail. Today’s homes hold video rooms more often than workshops and most DNs, and DN components are bought by sailors rather than built by them. Additionally, modern technology, especially concerning masts, has put the construction of some components beyond the capabilities of most of those still interested in building things.

Of course, some DNs are still being home-built, and the official plans are an important resource. But the focus of home builders is on the fuselage, runner plank, tiller, and sometimes runners. Most other

DN components are now bought from commercial vendors.

Critiquing Our Existing Official Plans

The current Official Plans borrow heavily from the practices of the Gougeon Brothers, which is good. A fuselage built with care from the current official plans would be robust, and depending on materials used, could be at or close to minimum weight. It could form the basis of a competitive racing package. Optional key dimensions might encourage builders to tailor their fuselages for their own body shapes.

The current Official Plans show a reliable way to build a runner plank, but don’t reflect modern practice for runner plank crown. A builder would benefit from advice on how to vary plank characteristics for differing sailor weights. Such information is currently available elsewhere. The current Official Plans show an adjustable tiller, but not of a design currently popular. Tiller designs by the Gougeon Brothers or Geoff Sobering, both easily buildable, are more representative of current practice. Carbon fiber or Kevlar socks make foam-cored, adjustable tillers an easy project for anyone who plays with epoxy.

The current Official Plans show two of the four types of runners approved by the IDNIYRA, and one of those two is not representative of today’s practice. A builder would likely rely upon other sources of information to build runners rather than the Official Plans.

The current Official Plans show a wood mast and boom, each with an aluminum luff tube. Neither

represent current state of the art and the wood mast would not be competitive for front-of-fleet racing.

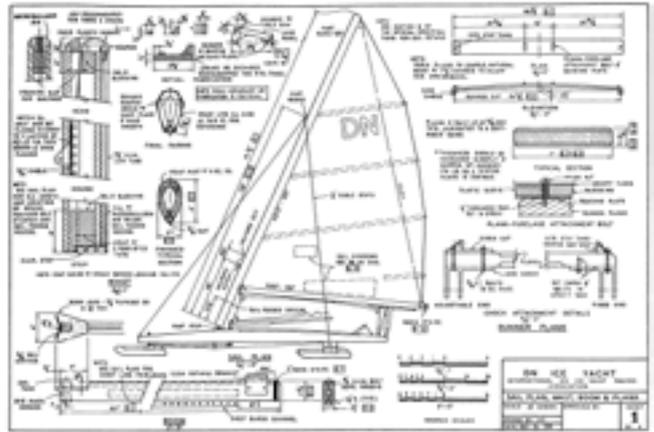
Most if not all of the hardware shown on the Official Plans would now be bought rather than made by builders. Some of the hardware has been superseded (the high Sarns steering post in particular). Still, a reference drawing for fittings provides useful support to the Official Specifications.

What Might New Official Plans Look Like?

Would revised Official Plans just look like updated versions of the Hal Chamberlain plans? Probably not. New plans should reflect current needs. One possible format might be:

1. Sail Plan and General Arrangement (US and Metric Units)
2. Fuselage (US and Metric Units; this could be one drawing or two)
3. Runner Plank (US and Metric Units, as per current plans but with gull-wing crown and guidance on dimensions and materials for varying stiffness)
4. Runner Plank (US and Metric Units, similar to Swedish drawing for Luks-style plank)
5. Hardware (US and Metric Units with updates for low-profile steering, etc)
6. Runners (US and Metric Units; typical runners of various types)

Note that the Plans would not provide drawings for mast or boom. The general arrangement might note that details are available elsewhere. The drawings could include guidance on variations from the 'standard' approach, such as variations in bottom profile, side plank depth or fuselage width. This alternative approach would focus on elements of a DN most commonly built by home builders. Arguably, hardware could be omitted entirely, but availability of hardware drawings would support entry of new commercial suppliers to the market. Builders are still buying Official Plans from IDNIYRA. Is it time for us to offer drawings that are not nearly 40 years old?



From the Class Secretary

As the person who fulfills orders for the Official DN Plans, I send them out knowing they no longer reflect how most DNs are built today. The structure shown in the drawings is fundamentally sound, but many details are dated, some references are obsolete, and important aspects of modern practice are simply not represented. Each time I send a set, I am aware that we can do better.

For that reason, I approached Warren Nethercote about leading an effort to rethink and reorganize the plans. Warren is uniquely suited to the task. He had a professional career as a naval architect, serves on the Technical Committee, and is himself a DN home builder. He understands the rules, the history, and the practical realities of construction. He is also thoughtful about how North American practice compares with Europe, and what is worth incorporating.

This is not about plan sales. It is about the long-term health of the class and ensuring that what we publish under the name "Official Plans" is accurate, relevant, and useful to current and future builders.

Our published drawings should reflect the best of where we are today. I hope members will support this effort and help move it forward.

– Deb Whitehorse
IDNIYRA Class Secretary



FROM PUB CRAWL TO 60 KNOTS ON ICE

PETER SHORETT, A SAILOR FROM THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, HAS SPENT DECADES RACING ON THE WATER. THIS WINTER HE TRIED SOMETHING NEW, TRAVELING TO WISCONSIN TO SAIL HIS FIRST DN REGATTA AT THE NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP.

At a December pub crawl with some of the Northwest's best sailors, I asked the question – have you ever been ice boating? Chris said no – bucket list. Paul said no – bucket list. Carl said no – sounds fun. Dan said no – bucket list. Ken said – are you crazy?

After the crawl, I did some research and found that the DN iceboat had a rather large class. I emailed the North American Class Secretary with the simple request that I, as a long-time competitive sailor who has never experienced ice boating, would like to know the best way to get introduced to hard sailing. She responded that "it is a remarkable kind of sailing, but it is also one of the most weather-dependent sports there is. Because of that, we cannot set up rides in advance." How true this would be.

To my surprise, about one week later, a huge proponent of ice boating – Daniel Hearn – after some introductory communications, noted that "There are only two fixed-date events in U.S. ice sailing every season. One of them already happened, and the other is the DN North American Championships, January 24–31. I'd suggest you put that one on your calendar; I can set you up with equipment." Which turned into him offering to host me for the event.

What does that mean? Well, for me, that meant flying to Madison, Wisconsin, where Daniel lives; waiting until Wednesday for the committee to announce the location for the event; then driving on Friday, with practice on Saturday and racing on Sunday. Realize that ice boaters will drive many hours to find the right ice to hold an event.

The first choice was near Syracuse, Indiana, so

boats from all over the world descended on Syracuse, only to find out there was a storm traveling through that threatened to cover the snow with ice. My wise host said, "Let's hold off driving the five hours to Syracuse and see what develops," thinking that lake would be a no-go with too much snow. Ok, extend the hotel and car reservation another day.



As things developed, it was not until Monday a.m. that Daniel, as a ranked sailor along with others from the Four Lakes Yacht Club, was tasked with driving one hour north of Madison to check out Green Lake. This was the lake – 17 degrees, blowing 15 knots, -40+ wind chill. That is cold, even by DN ice boating standards. This would be home for the next five days.

So the caravan of sailors in Syracuse made the six-plus-hour drive to Green Lake for the event. As I



said, the location of the event site changes, and can even change in the middle of the event if conditions deteriorate.

After touring Daniel's shop, with what seemed like 20-some-odd iceboats, I helped prep some gear for the trip. He had set me up with a very nice boat built in Estonia. It had been sailed by a world champion. I had no excuses.

The racing got pushed out because of the cold, with the first start now Tuesday, so I took Monday to go for my first spin in the boat. Three pant layers and five top layers, balaclava, helmet, goggles, heated socks, spiked cleats, and gloves – I was ready to go. It was still very cold, I think -5 and blowing 12 knots or so. I sheeted in and quickly was flying along the ice at 50 mph – so fast that I had to stop and realize what I had just done.

I sailed around for about 45 minutes, trying to get comfortable in the boat (I never did), and called an end to my practice. Who was I to fool? I had no idea what I was doing. But my host gave me the best pointer: just sheet in as hard as you can, get the mast to bend to leeward, and take off. That is what I did – hardly able to see, lying flat in the boat about eight inches above the ice. What a feeling.

The start of an iceboat race is like a Le Mans-style start, with each sailor standing alongside their boat, waiting for the start signal, then running as fast as possible, jumping into the boat, bearing away to generate speed (speed is your friend), then holding on for the ride. Boats seeded with odd numbers 1 through xx start on port to the right, and 2 through xx start on starboard to the left.

Knowing my limited experience and poor visibility, I was allowed to start on port, which allowed me to go to the layline and come in on starboard to avoid hitting anyone. Simple, really – one long port tack, then flop onto starboard, round, stay on starboard,

gybe to port for the leeward layline, repeat three laps. A pretty safe way to start out.

The sailors are divided into three fleets – Gold, Silver, and Bronze. Each sailor is ranked from past results into the three groups and randomly assigned a starting position in each class. The first race is a qualifying race, with the top 12 boats in the Bronze Fleet advancing to the Silver Fleet and the top 12 in the Silver Fleet advancing to the Gold. Once the fleets are established, the racing flips to Gold starting first, then Silver, with Bronze last. Each race lasts 10 to 15 minutes, and only one class sails at one time.

I was in the Bronze Fleet, thankfully, and managed a 15th in the first race, so did not advance, and scored 3rd in the first Bronze Fleet race. Ultimately 4th overall – not bad for a beginner, I was told.

But the story is the speed at which these boats travel and how hard it is to see other boats, let alone where you are going, at 50 to 60 knots. The runners (skates) chatter on the ice and jump on hard ridges, shaking the boat. Sometimes there are cracks that can catch the runners. But our Principal Race Officer did a great job of setting up a fair and safe course.

I did learn I have muscles I did not know I had. I was so sore from pushing my legs to see out of the boat, pulling in the mainsheet with tremendous force, and from my neck – even though there is a shock-cord assist to help hold your head up. I was sore all over.

The NAs had three days of racing. Only one of seven races was light; the others were pedal to the metal for three laps, then collapse at the end.

In the Pacific Northwest, we are soft-water sailors; ice boaters are hard-water sailors. One cool part about hard-water sailing is that when there is a break in the action, or no wind, you can walk among



your competitors and friends and chat, rather than be stuck on a boat in soft water where you're limited to chatting with the folks on your boat, with some occasional banter from boats passing by. This was a break in the action on the light-wind day two, and by then things were warming up – 0 degrees in the morning, rising to maybe 15 degrees.

Following the NAs was the Nationals – a less formal but equally serious two-day event. By now, many of the Europeans and those who traveled great distances had left for home. The racing was in lighter winds but equally enjoyable, until the end when the wind completely shut off. We were a very long distance from the launch site, and it was a slow push back to home base.

I was asked what the most surprising part of this was for me. My first answer was having to skate the boat back to the launch site. It sure beats rocking a Laser back to the docks. But the real answer is the amazing speed at which these boats travel – and

just how good the top competitors are. The mark roundings in that much breeze were like hearing airplanes fly overhead as the boats carved around the corners at what must have been 30 or 40 miles an hour.

I was also asked if I was coming back for more. I do have all the gear...

Peter Shorett

A Seattle native, Peter grew up immersed in sailing, racing family and friends' dinghies and keelboats including OK Dinghies, Lasers, 505s, 49ers, J/24s, Melges 24s, Olsen 30s, and Moore 24s. He was an avid windsurfer before moving into IOR and ORC keelboats. He currently owns and campaigns a Farr 395 on the Pacific Northwest circuit. His home port is Port Madison Yacht Club on Bainbridge Island, Washington.





DN NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP & US NATIONALS - A LOOK THROUGH A NEWBIE'S (FOGGY) GOGGLES

FROM SANDUSKY BAY TO GREEN LAKE, RYAN KYLE US5675 TAKES HIS DN PROGRAM ON THE ROAD FOR THE FIRST TIME – AND LEARNS FAST WHAT HARD-WATER RACING IS ALL ABOUT.

Racing sailboats is an activity that has become a large part of my life. In the summers growing up, my family and sailing team traveled to every regatta in our region, testing our growing skills against peers from sailing clubs all over the Great Lakes. Looking back, I realize I was fortunate to have been exposed to this lifestyle and decided to continue in the sport through college sailing and finally adult sailing in the way of one-design racing, offshore racing, and cruising (in my downtime).

Racing iceboats is something I always dreamed of but never had the opportunity to fulfill until this year. I had owned an older DN, handed down to me by a close friend, for a handful of years and took every opportunity that we had ice to go sailing on Sandusky Bay. Although I enjoyed every moment of gliding across our frozen bay, I knew that if I wanted to race, I needed to upgrade my equipment to compete. Being in my late 20's and owning a set of tools, I decided to build a hull as it was the most economical option to end up with the caliber of gear I knew I wanted.

After spending a winter building the boat, then another winter finishing the boat, I ended up with a beautiful hull that was nothing but a showpiece without a mast, sail, plank, and runners. After scouring the 4LIYC classified page and putting out many feelers for good used gear, I finally came across a deal that was right for me. I purchased a Gold Cup-ready program and combined the gear to come up with the boat I have today. In the 2024/2025 season, I finally put my program on the ice for the first time and got to experience the exhilarating feeling of sailing a DN in control with a racing mast and fast runners. WOW, I was hooked and knew I was ready to take my program on the road.

This winter I decided to adjust my southern sailing schedule a bit to allow the opportunity to attend at least one DN regatta. I had my sights set on attending the Western Challenge as it seemed like a great way to step into the class. I was not able to make that one happen, so I moved on to the prospect of attending a regional championship; maybe the Westerns, maybe the Centrals, and I was also eyeing up the Northwest regatta as a possibility. Those regattas were being postponed because of bad/no ice conditions, and I began to grow anxious and thought to myself, "maybe this just isn't the year." Then, as the scheduled date for the North Americans was approaching, I was looking at the regional forecast, and it became clear that this regatta was going to happen, one way or another. I really did not want to make the NAC my first go at DN racing, but it seemed that I was "up to bat" and needed to make the trip happen.

At first, the regatta was called on for Lake Wawasee in Syracuse, IN; a convenient 3-hour drive from my hailing port of Sandusky, OH. Then winter storm Fern wiped out the area's ice with widespread 4-10" of snow. All the while, the 237' deep Green Lake in Green Lake, WI, was freezing rapidly and finally delivered a beautiful sheet of snow-free ice to sail on. It was clear to me that the regatta was going to move, and my sweetheart 3-hour drive turned into an 8-hour drive with an unwelcomed snow squall. Oh well, I guess that's iceboating!

Finally, I had my sights set on my first iceboating excursion. I packed all of my gear in my van, made arrangements for dog care, and booked a hotel room. I was officially attending the DN North American Championship as my first DN regatta.

I was a nervous wreck. After attending hundreds of

regattas in my life, I still get butterflies about getting my boat to the starting line, and this was no different. There were many unknowns for me including, but not limited to, "what gloves and how many pairs do I bring?", "what do I pack for staging in the pits?", "how do I keep my water bottle from freezing?", "where is my bobstay post?" Heck, I didn't even know how to physically put my boat on the starting line even once I got there. Fortunately, there are people in the class that are willing to answer these questions and share information. What a relief.

After a long drive north through whiteout conditions in South Bend and missing Chicago rush hour by the skin of my teeth, I arrived in Green Lake at the Heidel House hotel. I arrived with some daylight left, so I decided to quickly set my boat up on the ice before checking in with the race committee. After checking in, I milled around the hotel lobby, quickly meeting people in the class who were willing to answer my newbie questions. A special thanks goes out to Tim Bellard, David Frost, and Cooper Frost for answering my questions and offering to lend me some gear even before the event started. Also, it was great to meet another newbie, Isaiah Skaug, to compare notes with about our experience getting to the regatta. I joined the group for the opening ceremony and stayed for the very helpful rules discussion.

The first day of racing was cancelled due to extreme cold and too much wind. I was thankful for this decision, as my heart was beating out of my chest thinking about sailing in those conditions for my first lap around the course. I took this as an opportunity to hone in on my preparation for the first race. I went to the local Fleet Farm store and purchased two more sets of mittens and extra-thick long johns; a good move that I thanked myself for each day of racing.

The fleet was greeted on the second day with champagne sailing conditions on clean ice, and I felt like I was finally ready to race. I sailed out on my plate runners, set up a pit area, and switched over to my racing insert runners. All the while, I was rushing and extremely nervous for my first start in the Bronze qualifier race. After the start and hopping into my boat for the first beat, my goggles fogged up immediately, and I could only see out of

the very bottom corner of my lens. I quickly pulled my face mask down to minimize the warm air traveling into my goggles and made the best out of my first race, despite barely being able to see. So, my first adjustment of the series was to rearrange my wardrobe to keep my goggles clear. I qualified for the Silver Fleet and had to quickly prepare for the Silver qualifier race to follow. I sailed well in both races and earned a position in the Silver Fleet. My first goal was met for the week by qualifying for the Silver Fleet AND completing all of the races thus far. A win in my book.

The racing series to follow was an excellent week of sailing, to say the least. I feel as though I improved each race and used information shared by my competitors to help propel my boat faster around the course each time. We saw conditions varying from medium breeze "full-on" racing to light air, requiring some pushing around the course.

After wrapping up the North Americans, we started the National Championship and ended the week with the last two races for the Nationals. I still had one goal to meet, and I was prepared to go home leaving that box unchecked. We started the last race of the series, and I had a great start, allowing me to take a commanding position early on in the race. When I rounded the weather mark of the first beat in 1st place, all I could hear in my head from my TIYC friends was, "when you get it hooked up, lean on the gas and stay in it." I pressed a little harder, hit a couple shifts, and didn't look back until I saw the checkered flag. I had just won my first race in the DN. All of the hours spent building, researching, asking questions, and traveling had finally paid off. What a rewarding way to finish out a series.

Many thanks go out to PRO Pat Heppert for putting us on the best ice available on Green Lake and his team of volunteers for their seamless efforts in running a fantastic regatta. A special thanks goes to Deb Whitehorse for her EXCELLENT communications leading up to the regatta. This helped me make my decision to attend the regatta as a newbie with confidence and clarity. Finally, thanks to my competitors for helping make my first experience in the DN fleet unforgettable. I'll certainly be back for more!

MINUTES OF THE 2026 IDNIYRA ANNUAL GOVERNING MEETING

January 28, 2026

Minutes of the IDNIYRA Annual Governing Meeting

Held in conjunction with the 2026 DN North American Championships
Heidel House, Green Lake, Wisconsin

1. Call to Order

Commodore Rob Holman (US 3705) called the meeting to order at 7:19 PM.

2. Roll Call (Determination of Quorum)

Those present included members of the Governing Committee and the general membership. In accordance with Article VIII of the IDNIYRA Bylaws, a quorum is defined as any number present. A quorum was therefore established.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by David Frost (US 5358), seconded by Cooper Frost (US 5558). Motion approved.

4. Approval of the Minutes of the 2025 Annual Meeting

(Published in the February 2025 Runner Tracks)
Motion to approve the minutes by Gail Muliatt (US 5043), seconded by David Frost (US 5358). Motion approved.

5. Secretary's Report (Deb Whitehorse, US 2366)

Runner Tracks continues to be published quarterly. Members were encouraged to submit articles, particularly technical and shop-related content. The class website was reported as stable and reliable. Discussion was held regarding alternatives to the former class forum, with emphasis on preserving technical knowledge in a searchable, long-term format. Communication tools, including WhatsApp, were discussed as part of ongoing evaluation for regatta and class communications.

6. Commodore's Report (Rob Holman, US 3705)

The Commodore welcomed attendees to the 2026 North American Championships and U.S. Nationals

and acknowledged challenges related to weather and venue decisions.

A moment of silence was observed in remembrance of:

Hal Bowman (US1277)

JR Francis (US807)

Jane Sherry, long-time scorer

7. Treasurer's Report (Deb Whitehorse, US 2366)

The Treasurer reported that the Association remains in good financial condition. The annual financial report was made available for review by members in attendance. Donations and voluntary contributions were acknowledged as important to supporting class operations and regattas. Nonprofit compliance and required filings were discussed. Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report by Gail Muliatt (US 5043), seconded by Ed Demerest (US 5194). Motion approved. Membership levels were discussed in general terms, with comparison to prior years and the observation that membership typically strengthens as the season progresses.

8. Vice-Commodore's Report (Perpetual Trophies)

The report was presented on behalf of the Vice-Commodore. New and refurbished trophy boxes were completed. The JR Francis Memorial Trophy was introduced and accepted by the class. The trophy will be awarded to the winner of the first Gold Fleet race at each North American Championship. The trophy was created by JR Francis and donated by his family. Motion that a letter of thanks be sent to the Francis family by Gail Muliatt (US 5043). Motion approved.

9. Technical Committee Report

No formal Technical Committee report was presented. Comments were made praising the clarity and

usefulness of the proposed DN specification clarifications.

10. Nominations: 2026–2027 IDNIYRA Officers

The following slate was presented:
Commodore: Rob Holman (US 3705)
Vice-Commodore: Karen Binder (US 5630)
Secretary/Treasurer: Deb Whitehorse (US 2366)
Past Commodore: Bob Cummins (US 3433)
Motion to close nominations by Ron Sherry (US 44),
seconded by David Frost (US 5358).
Motion approved.

11. Technical Committee Vacancy

The resignation of Paul Goodwin after several decades of service was acknowledged with appreciation.
Ron Sherry (US 44) was nominated to fill the vacancy.
No additional nominations were received.
Appointment approved.

12. Technical Committee Proposal – DN Specifications

Proposed clarifications to the DN Specifications (General; Section C – Mast; Section D – Boom), as published in the December 2025 Runner Tracks, were discussed.
In accordance with Article VIII of the IDNIYRA Bylaws, changes to the Official Specifications require approval by electronic vote, regardless of

the number present.
Action: The proposed DN Specification clarifications will be submitted to the membership for electronic voting.

13. New Business

Discussion topics included junior program activity and equipment donations, regional participation and regatta site rotation, Canadian event insurance challenges, and advance permitting for potential regatta venues.

14. For the Good of the Class

Discussion included participation levels and the impact of weather, positive feedback on communications and fleet structure, cold-weather race management practices, and long-term efforts to support and retain newer and younger sailors.

15. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by David Frost (US 5358).
Motion approved.
The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Whitehorse (US 2366)
Secretary/Treasurer
International DN Ice Yacht Racing Association



Sebastian Sorensen. Photo: Rachel Bartel for @harken_inc

THE ONE-SECOND **LEEWARD** ROUNDING

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT
BY ROBERT CUMMINS US3433

In the September 2025 issue of Runner Tracks, there is a lengthy discussion of the rules as they apply at leeward marks. The fact that the discussion takes nearly three pages suggests that some simplification and clarification might be in order.

What follows – which might be known as the “One-Second Rounding” – is an attempt to clarify and simplify Rule 8 while removing the ambiguity caused by the words “rounding maneuver.” Nearly a full page in Runner Tracks is devoted to the ambiguity surrounding the rounding maneuver. Let’s take that term out of the rules using the One-Second Rounding, while at the same time preserving, to some extent, the existing right-of-way (ROW) rules.

We also want to promote safety, primarily by discouraging sailors from trying to sneak around the leeward mark when they have few, if any, rights. Furthermore, the rounding should be less tactical.

The easiest way to do this is to create a line – or extended rhumb line – which could actually be painted on the ice, extending directly to leeward of the leeward mark. Rounding would begin when a yacht breaks the plane of that line and end when the yacht has cleared it. One second, or less.

This would be easily observable, without any discussion about where the rounding “maneuver” might have begun or ended. Prior to breaking the plane of the extended line, a yacht would be subject to the off-wind rules. Upon clearing the line, the yacht would be governed by the on-the-wind rules.

The intent is to give any boat that is slightly ahead as many rights as possible, while making it more disadvantageous to try to sneak in from behind. A DN skipper simply does not have the option of doing much looking around in any sort of breeze during a leeward rounding.

Beyond this, the word “maneuver” tends to have

the words “tactical” and “strategic” tied to it, whether explicitly or implicitly. The whole “maneuver” discussion needs to be removed because, in many instances, it is entirely subjective. We are trying to clarify a change of course from downwind to upwind where a mark happens to be involved. Making that change nearly instantaneous – so that there is no room for speculation as to who was doing what, and when – would seem advantageous.

Let’s examine a few situations more closely.

In the One-Second Rounding, when a boat breaks the plane of the extended rhumb line, it is now on the windward leg of the course. This boat now has the rights of a boat sailing on the wind.

This means that:

1. A boat behind that has not broken the plane is still sailing off the wind and must stay clear.
 - a) A boat to leeward that has not broken the plane is still outside, overtaking, off the wind, and therefore must stay clear.
 - b) A boat to windward that has not broken the plane is still on the downwind leg, overtaking, and thus must stay clear of a boat on the wind.
2. If a boat behind breaks the plane before the boat ahead clears the plane, that boat is overtaking and must stay clear (currently in Rule 8), because the boat ahead is already considered to be on the windward leg. It does not matter whether the overtaking boat is windward or leeward, because the leading boat is on the windward leg.
3. If two boats break the plane simultaneously, the windward/leeward rules apply.
 - a) A mark is not considered to be an obstruction as described in Rule 7, and thus a leeward boat is not required to give room to a windward boat. (I would argue that the current wording does not

indicate that a windward boat is owed room, but only that the leeward boat must stay clear.)

b) It should be made clear in any addition to the rules (or the Sailing Instructions) that if any contact occurs between boats in this situation, the leeward boat will be exonerated, thus further discouraging risk-taking. Hit the mark and you're out; hit the leeward boat and you're out – a no-win situation.

4. An opposite-tack situation is very unlikely to occur during the One-Second Rounding, but if it does:

a) If starboard has somehow broken the plane, she is on the windward leg and has rights over a boat that hasn't broken the plane. (Yes, this ignores the current definition of "on-the-wind," and that may need to be accounted for.)

b) If a port boat has broken the plane, she is on the wind and has rights over an off-the-wind boat.

c) Breaking the plane simultaneously (probably impossible) becomes a basic port/starboard situation. Starboard jibing is likely to break Rule 6 if she tries to jibe inside. Conversely, if she doesn't jibe and somehow breaks the plane, port must keep clear.

As I see it, there would be two approaches to adopting the One-Second Rounding. We could suggest that it be added to the current NIA rules for use by the DN Class, because the big-boat sailors are unlikely to adopt it. Alternatively, we could modify the rules via the Sailing Instructions. I have no clue whether the ROW rules can be modified

that way, but we can modify nearly anything else in the SIs, so why not that?

The One-Second Rounding also provides an opportunity to observe and record any incident that might take place without having to reference course alterations that may or may not have occurred prior to breaking the plane. As pointed out in the Runner Tracks article, the NIA rules are silent on when the rounding "maneuver" begins and ends. The One-Second Rounding eliminates this problem.

We could even paint the line on the ice so sailors would know exactly where they are in the process, as would observers. A boat that has broken the plane has started her rounding; thus, any overtaking boat must stay clear.

Furthermore, the One-Second Rounding strengthens the rights of the leeward boat where I believe they are necessary. The intent is to give the first boat to break the plane all possible rights. Put another way, any overtaking boat is the burdened boat – which she already is – but even more clearly so under the One-Second Rounding.

In short: either go outside, or slow down and go behind and to windward of the boats in front of you. Conversely, nothing prevents a windward boat from taking advantage of room freely given. If the leeward boat heads up, which she can do, she must do so in a manner that allows the windward boat time to keep clear (NIA B5).

Robert Cummins US3433



Photo: Rachel Bartel for @harken_inc

2026 SPEED SYMPOSIUM - THEY SAID WHAT?

DURING THE NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP, THREE TOP DN SAILORS TOOK THE TIME TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM THE FLEET ABOUT SPEED, TUNING AND SETUP. WHAT FOLLOWED WAS AN EVENING FULL OF PRACTICAL ADVICE ON HOW TO MAKE A DN GO FAST.

BY MIKE BLOOM (US 321) AND JAMES "T" THIELER (US 5224)

One of the highlights of this year's North American Championship Regatta turned out to be the Wednesday night "Speed Symposium." Western Regional Commodore Tim Mower (US 5871) used his impressive power of persuasion to convince Ron Sherry (US 44), Chris Berger (US 5166) and James "T" Thieler (US 5224) to share their insights on how to make a DN go fast. The three agreed to sit down with the fleet where they answered questions relating to set up, settings and tactics. The well-attended event was a rare opportunity for us mere mortals to ask questions of three of the world's best iceboaters.

The first thing we learned was that each of these three racers sails completely different programs. Obviously, Ron only sails his own equipment, a Composite Concepts hull, mast and plank. Chris sails a Kardas (Polish) hull, Hamrak 60 mast and a Sherry plank. T sails a Kent hull and mast on an old Luks plank. Seeing such diverse programs should be a relief to the rest of us. It tells us that there is no single formula for speed and that with a focus on tuning, the equipment we already sail can be tuned to go fast.

Chris began the discussion by explaining the importance of having what he called "base" settings for your boat. These settings include mast rake, plank location and side stay tension. These are the middle-of-the-road settings that you use when you put your boat on the ice. These are the settings that work for you and your boat.

Once you establish your baseline settings, you can adjust your settings depending on conditions. The nice thing about having baseline numbers is that if you make a change and it doesn't work, you have a baseline setting to return to. That said, T cautioned about not getting too locked into numbers, and all

three encouraged everyone to be willing to experiment and try different things. Every sailor and every boat is different. What works for one sailor might not work for another.

After listening to the three experts, it was surprising to hear their baseline settings were not all that different.

First, they discussed mast rake. All three suggest a mast rake angle between 15 and 18 degrees. If you have a softer mast like Chris' Hamrak mast, you'll want to sail your mast raked a bit forward. With a Sherry mast, which is a bit stiffer than a Hamrak mast, you might rake back slightly. With these settings, the boom will be horizontal or slightly angled down at the leech end, with the mainsheet slack.

Second, they discussed the plank. The panel recommended that your plank bend (deflect) between 44-46 mm when you stand on the middle of it. T recommended you attach the plank in the middle hole or a little forward.

Third, they discussed side stays. T explained he sets up his boat so his side stays are just snug, but not loose. According to T, you should be able to attach the stays to the tang by just leaning on the adjuster fitting. If you need to pull on the mainsheet or get someone to lean on the mast to get the pin in, then your stays are too tight.

T also sets his mainsheet blocks on the back deck as far aft as they'll go. For medium to heavy air, T sets the blocks on the boom so the sheet is pulling the boom aft just a bit when sheeted all the way in and the blocks are "nested" or "two-blocked." Ron explained that by pulling aft on the boom it takes the rotation out of the mast. The object here is to

reduce fore and aft mast bend to get more leech tension for higher pointing and top-end speed. Having the mast under-rotated also decreases drag.

In light air, all three barely pull back on the boom. Ron indicated that a certain amount of rotation is desirable to add camber for low-end power and acceleration. In light winds with sticky conditions, allow the mast to rotate.

From here the panel moved into a long discussion about tuning, and they all immediately focused on the mast, or more specifically, mast bend. Not surprising, it didn't take a panel of experts to tell the rest of us that DN sailing is about speed. Speed wins races. Mast bend gives you speed. So most everything the panel discussed was directly related to mast bend. According to the panel, if your mast is not bending, you will be slow, guaranteed.

Ron began this portion of the discussion explaining there are three primary ways to affect mast bend: adjust your head stay, adjust your sail height or move the mast ball on the boat. Learn how these three affect mast bend and you will always be fast.

In light air, we do what we can to force the mast to bend because the wind does not create enough wind pressure to bend it. Lengthening the head stay, raising the sail and moving the mast step forward all cause the mast to bend more.

Conversely, in heavy air, we may take steps to stiffen the mast so it will not bend too much. Shortening the head stay, lowering the sail and moving the mast step aft will make the mast bend less.

Chris said once he has found his base settings, he adjusts mast bend primarily through sail height. Chris raises his sail if he needs more mast bend and will lower his sail if he wants a stiffer mast. Ron said as the air gets lighter, he will rake his mast aft or raise his sail, and when the air gets real light he might do both.

Chris also adjusts his side stays fairly often. The looser you make your side stays, the more the mast and plank bend. Ron says to tighten the side stays more for heavy air and less for light air. But when it

is really windy, you may need to loosen the side stays again so that you have more control and do not spin out.

In response to a question about plank position, the panel revealed they rarely change the location of their plank. The one exception is light air with snow or sticky conditions. Then you might see them move the plank forward when steering is not a problem and you need the most hiking leverage.

All three sailors bring three different sails to every regatta. Their quivers include a full sail, a flat sail and a very flat speed sail. As for selection, they tend to use the flattest sail possible, depending on conditions. Using a flat sail eliminates the aerodynamic drag inherent in fuller sails. On smooth hard ice, flatter sails tend to be faster than a fuller sail. That said, if the ice is sticky or if there is snow on the ice, they do use fuller sails to stay powered up.

Speaking of sails, the panel members noted they frequently change the top batten in their sail to match the wind and ice. They use a stiffer batten in heavy air and a softer batten in snow or sticky ice, when more power is needed. They generally tighten the battens just tight enough to remove the wrinkles.

The final tip all three experts agreed upon was SAIL THE BOAT. Nothing will make you faster than practice. Practice starting, practice your tacks and jibs. Practice rounding buoys. Tiller time makes you fast.

Both T and Ron stressed the value of sailing the course at regattas before the day's racing begins. Sailing the course provides a chance to find lay lines and practice mark roundings. But equally important, it provides an opportunity to fine tune your settings for that day's conditions.

T told me that before racing starts he always sails the course to see how the boat feels; then (quoting the late great Jan Gougeon) T said, "tune for effect!"

For example, if the boat hikes excessively and is hard to control, T might encourage more mast bend by raising the halyard a bit or easing the side stays.

T does this before messing with the rake. He thinks it's easier and doesn't affect the geometry of the rig. Similarly, Chris' first move is to adjust the sail or adjust his side stays. T also recommends experimenting with asymmetrical side stay adjustments. You can easily change a setting on one side but not the other. Then sail around on different tacks and see which side feels better.

If the boat is too easy to sail (never hikes at all, rig bends out too easily, lack of pointing ability upwind), do the reverse of the steps above: adjust the sail height, tighten the side stays. If these don't work, maybe move the mast step aft on the deck.

T commented that this is also where a tuning partner can help tremendously. Nothing will make you faster, quicker, than a tuning partner. A tuning partner lets you make incremental tuning changes and allows you to see in real time what changes make you faster. Use one boat as a constant and one as the adjustment test boat. Keep it simple. **ONLY MAKE ONE ADJUSTMENT AT A TIME!** This way you can get a feel for which adjustment does what. Then share what you learn after each test run. It really helps to sort out what works and what doesn't.

All three of our experts agreed the boat should be work to sail. As only T could say, "Remember, it's a DN, not a La-Z-Boy recliner!" It should hike a bit in

puffs, you should have to slide aft and outboard off the starting line and out of tacks to get the rig to pop out to leeward, and you should have to ease and trim a bit to keep the boat on the ice. Hunt and peck until you find the sweet spots for your boat and sailing style.

Keeping notes of your settings and changes is also very helpful. Get a notebook and take notes of what settings work and what doesn't. Also record ice conditions and wind speed. Review it every fall, before scrub racing and on the way to every regatta.

Lastly, don't forget the best speed symposium always takes place on the ice. Don't be shy. Look at other people's boats and setups. Seek out faster sailors who race equipment similar to yours. Look at how they have their boat set up. If you look at the top sailors' boats, you will see tuning patterns do emerge.

Now that you know how to set up your boat like the pros, it's time to go out and win races. And to quote T, "when you get to the winner's circle, act like you've been there before!"

Think Ice.

Mike Bloom & James "T" Thieler



*Chris Berger US5166 makes sail adjustments at the 2026 North American Championship.
Photo: Rachel Bartel for @harken_inc*

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