



TROUBLE CHUTING

IN THE SECOND PART OF OUR SERIES ON TAKING THE FEAR OUT OF SPINNAKERS, DUNCAN WELLS ADVISES HOW TO AVOID AND RESOLVE COMMON PROBLEMS

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CONTROL OF THE SPINNAKER IS KEY. ESSENTIALLY YOU WANT TO KEEP IT OVER THE BOAT

sail will unwrap itself; it won't. If the wrap is high up, ease the halyard a few feet to give the swivel at the head of the sail room to untwist.

To prevent a wrap in the first place, keep an eye out for the luff of the sail starting to fold in. Head up a little before it tries to furl around the forestay. You can set an anti-wrap net between the forestay and the mast (as mentioned in last month's issue), or set a scrap of headsail. Unfurl a little and sheet it off to the centre of the boat. This will act like an anti-wrap net and prevent the spinnaker from curling round the forestay.

Another thing to watch for is a fouled halyard on hoisting. Often the spinnaker halyard goes through a block at the top of the mast. Check that the halyard is clear to run before hoisting, and hoist the spinnaker behind the headsail.

If when you hoist the spinnaker behind the headsail you notice the kite is wrapped on itself, this has happened because the clews have been mixed up, probably in the bag. In an ideal world, good seamanship would mean you wouldn't have this

problem but, if it does occur, ease the halyard and bring the sail back down, untwist (this might be easiest by flipping the head round, rather than swapping the clews over) and rehoist.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Concentrating on the spinnaker is key at all times. Essentially you want to keep the boat underneath the sail. If you allow the spinnaker to hang too much off to one side or the other you are inviting trouble. Using tweakers to lead the spinnaker sheet inboard can help to improve shape and alignment.

Preventer

Set a preventer for the main from the end of the boom before setting out. Take it along the boom to the vang/kicker and store it here, so it is ready to set. Take the free end to a cleat on the bow and back to the cockpit to secure, or try a boom brake – see February issue for our test.



DUNCAN WELLS

When flying the kite, you particularly want to avoid a spinnaker wrap, a broach and a Chinese gybe.

Spinnakers can wrap themselves round the forestay for a number of reasons. They can wrap when being set – if you don't raise them behind the headsail, and sometimes even if you do. A gust of wind can

cause a wrap. Or, if you are sailing too directly downwind, air coming off the front of the mainsail can blow the spinnaker through the fore triangle and cause a wrap.

UNWRAPPING WRAPS

There are a number of things you can do to unwrap a spinnaker. First, try sailing slightly by the lee, being careful not to go past the gybe point, and see if wind from the wrong side will unwrap the spinnaker.

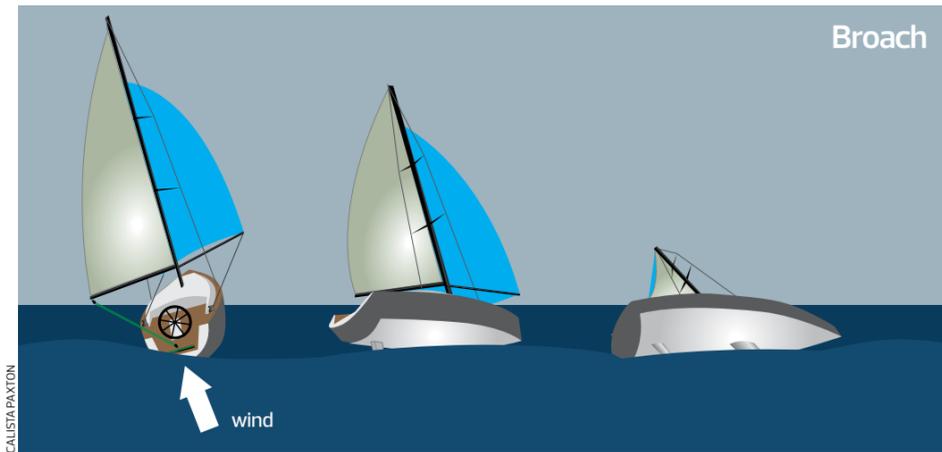
● **FACING PAGE**
Rolling out a small amount of headsail can stop the spinnaker from wrapping round the forestay

Size matters

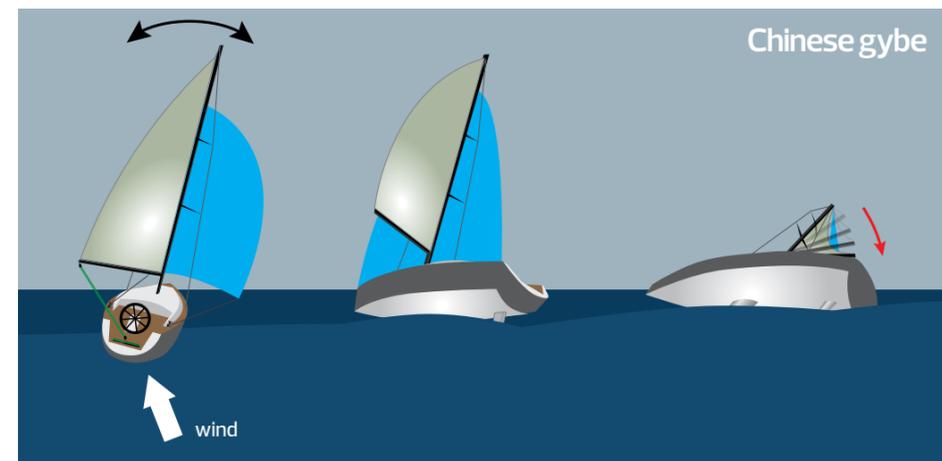
It is worth considering that while a spinnaker on a 30ft (9m) boat might be quite manageable for a couple, on a 35ft (10.6m) boat it might be half as big again. On a 45ft (13.7m) boat it will be nearly 2.5 times the size and on a 60ft boat about four times the size. And that's quite a different matter for a couple to handle.

If that doesn't unwrap it, gybe the main over and again sail low. Now air coming off the front of the main will hit the wrapped spinnaker from the other side and it should unwrap itself. Then gybe back onto the original tack and try not to sail too low again.

If the wrap is low in the sail, release the halyard, lower the sail and see if you can unwrap it by hand. Don't bring the pole back or head up to windward in the hope that the



- With too much power in the spinnaker, the boat heels to leeward
- Less rudder control, more heel and loss of steering follow
- The boat rounds up to windward and lies with the mast to leeward, sail in the water



- Side-to-side 'death roll' starts when the main traps too much air aloft
- The roll increases, the rudder loses grip and the boat heels too far to windward
- The boat is flattened on the water and the boom, momentarily held aloft, comes crashing down with force

BROACH

This happens when there is too much power in the spinnaker and the mainsail, and the spinnaker wanders off to leeward. This will introduce leeward heel. Less of the rudder is in the water and you lose steering control. So the boat heels more until you have no rudder control at all and the boat rounds up to windward. The boat is now on its side with spreaders in the water and the spinnaker in the water.

CHINESE GYBE

This occurs when the spinnaker is allowed to fly more off the windward side of the boat. I say 'allow' but often there is no choice, as you could end up in this position as a result of a 'death roll'.

If you are sailing dead downwind and the wind freshens, the boat

will start to roll because the mainsail is trapping too much air aloft; probably the kicker is off, which allows twist in the sail.

As the boat rolls, so the spinnaker moves from side to side and with each roll it moves its centre of effort further outboard. This is a 'death roll'. The roll increases, the rudder has no grip and eventually the boat heels over too far to windward and is flattened. Wipeout. The spinnaker goes into the water and very shortly after that the boom comes crashing down onto the water.

Both of these are to be avoided. When boats are being flattened on the water it is obviously important to hang on and keep out of the way of swinging booms but it is also important to keep away from the traveller and the mainsheet, which can inflict serious injury.

● **BELOW**
Recovering a free-flying spinnaker will mean sending someone up the mast



AVOIDING A BROACH

To stop the boat heeling to leeward, depower both the spinnaker, by easing the sheet, and the main, by releasing the kicker and possibly easing the main sheet. The sails are overpowered and you need to dump some wind. It is possible to anticipate a broach – you'll feel a lack of grip on the rudder. As the boat starts to heel to leeward, release the kicker and ease the main sheet. This may well bring the boat upright again, in which case you can put the kicker on and harden the sheet. If it doesn't bring the boat upright, ease the spinnaker sheet until you do reach vertical and then set up your trim again. If you feel the boat wanting to broach, you might well have too much sail up and might want to consider dropping the spinnaker, putting a reef in the main and setting a reefed genoa instead.

AVOIDING A CHINESE GYBE

To stop the boat leaning to windward, you need again to depower the spinnaker, this time by easing the sheet and also easing the guy so the pole goes forward. Then to flatten the main, pull the kicker on, halyard tight and outhaul tight – the aim is to open the leech and spill wind until the boat is upright again. Then re-trim.

Overall, you should aim to keep the spinnaker flying over the boat, rather than letting it go to one side or the other.

RECOVERING FROM A BROACH OR GYBE

If you've been caught out and haven't managed to get out of the situation in time and the boat is on its side,



the sail) try this: sail downwind so the spinnaker will fly forward of the boat and then send a crew member up the mast with a line. Attach this to the head of the sail and lead the end down to a block on deck and back to the cockpit. Haul on this line to bring the sail down as you ease the halyard and the crew gather the sail onto the foredeck.

ASYMMETRICS/ CRUISING CHUTES

You can get the same issues when using cruising chutes but to a lesser degree. You should apply the same principles and care as for symmetrical spinnakers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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depower the spinnaker by releasing the halyard. Make sure you maintain the tension on the sheets at this point. After the boat rights itself get the crew to recover the spinnaker, easing halyard and sheets as they do.

RECLAIMING A FREE-FLYING SPINNAKER

If you end up with the sheet and the guy running free and the spinnaker trailing out above you at the mast head attached by just the halyard (it can happen as lines get snatched out of hands and it is why you should never put stopper knots on spinnaker sheets and guys, because you might want to dump

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Universal Yachting RYA sailing school and yacht charter on 01243 687274 and universalyachting.com for the loan of their Beneteau Oceanis 37 *Splash*



Watch out for chafe

You might imagine that ropes will chafe against each other or against stainless steel wire but you might not consider that metal on metal, shackles and fittings, will chafe too. Reduce rope chafe by leading lines carefully to avoid as much contact with anything else as possible. And you can eliminate chafe on metal shackles by using 'soft' shackles, made from Dyneema. They are just as strong as metal shackles and yet they are soft to the touch and won't rub against other fittings.

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