

Rigging for Offwind Sailing in Cruising Catamarans



For years now many multihull manufacturers have sold the rather exciting illusion that cruising cats can sail the oceans at multi digit speeds on an eternal close or beam reach never wanting or needing to sail with the apparent wind aft of the beam.

With the exception of a few multimillion dollar all carbon fiber or racing designs, cruising cats end up sailing with the wind aft of the beam quite often.

Once laden with the interior most cruisers expect, and all the cruising gear and toys they want, cruising cats on average are 8-12 knot sailboats (about 20-30% faster than equivalent size monohulls) that albeit do it with no heeling, less work, and in shallower water than their mono hull counterparts.

When polled why they decided to go catamaran vs. mono hull, it has been my experience 99% of new owners will in order of priority, offer the following:

- Stability underway and at anchor
- Shallow draft
- More interior/ cockpit room, and cabin privacy for a given length
- Easier dockside handling, and redundancy of twin engines
- Faster motoring and sailing speeds for a given length

A wise man once said “Performance in a cruising boat is measured by VMG (Velocity made good) relative to energy expended by the crew” As a result of its

lighter weight, smaller required sails, and great stability, a cruising cat will provide better VMG than its monohull counterpart based on this formula.

Cruising sailors often want to sail in the direction of their downwind destination without endless jibing, which clearly is the most difficult maneuvers to perform safely offshore in any large cruising sailboat. It is true if you are willing to put in the work and pay attention to wind shifts, jibing downwind at the right angles and VMG to your downwind destination can be much faster, but make a mistake on a wind shift and probably not. As a result the average multihull cruiser will probably get where they are going quicker sailing closer to the rumblin.

The typical multihull rig configuration of swept shrouds and spreaders impedes letting the mainsail out to sail deeper angles, consequently most catamaran cruisers are sailing offwind perpetually over trimmed with a distorted mainsail shape.

Additionally the traditional mainsail traveler will not control twist at these deeper angles. Conventionally sheeted jibs have the same problem of excessive twist.

The Code zero or screacher sheeted to a fixed sprit is not very effective at angles deeper than a beam reach and would be much more effective with the ability to pull the tack to windward.

The custom Fastwater 52 cruising catamaran we developed, featured many ideas to improve performance ease of handling, and safety, when sailing offwind.

Freestanding Carbon Fiber Mast

With no shrouds to get in the way, the boom can be eased out for sailing deeper angles without distorting mainsail shape and reducing heeling forces.

Powerful Boom Vang

In lieu of a traveler, a powerful hydraulic boom vang controls twist at deeper angles, mainsheet adjustments are easier and quicker with less required purchase.



The camber spar in action

Boom Brake

More cruisers have been injured or knocked overboard while setting a preventer than almost any other maneuver. The boom brake is always ready and can be adjusted from the safety of the cockpit.

Camber Spar jib

I have put these on over 100 sailing craft, and still think it is one of the simplest ways to offer self-tacking with good twist control and the benefits of a full batten sail. It also has the ability to go wing on wing without the need of a whisker pole, and reduces sheet loads requiring less purchase, allowing quicker sail adjustments.

Retractable Bow Sprits

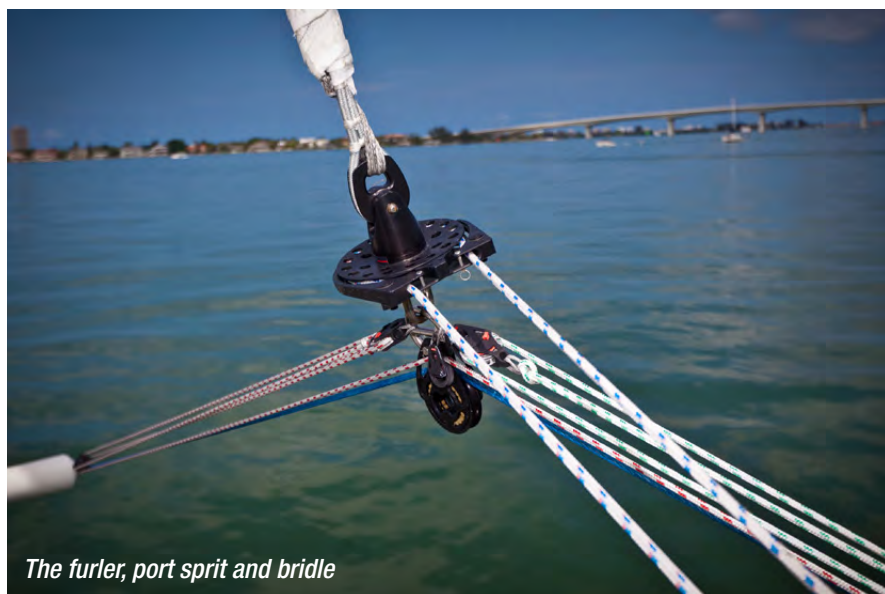
The adjustable bridles allow the operator in the cockpit to easily move the tack of the Code zero to windward for sailing deeper angles. The retractable bow sprits in each hull make maneuvering in port much easier.

Roller Furling Asymmetrical Spinnaker

With a dousing sock or sleeve, someone still has to go to the foredeck to deploy and retrieve, which can be dangerous when things don't work as they should. Furling allows the operator to accomplish quick deployment and retrieval from the safety of the cockpit. Additionally jibing single handed is made easier by rolling up the spinnaker, jibing the large main and re-deploying the spinnaker on the new jibe.

In seatrials we found the Fastwater 52 much easier to handle and faster at deeper sailing angles offwind, as a result of the ability to trim the mainsail to the proper angle without distortion of the sail, and twist control with the vang for the mainsail and Camber Spar for the jib.

For more information, contact Pat Reischmann at: preischmann@msn.com, or visit www.hytechmarine.com. To read more about the Fastwater 52, *Ice Wars II*, see MULTIHULLS Sept/Oct 2011 [here](#).



The furler, port sprit and bridle