

# Starting Line



November 2012

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# SYSCO

Small Yacht Sailing Club of Oregon

[www.syscosailing.org](http://www.syscosailing.org)

## From the Commodore

By Michael Nance, Commodore



First of all I would like to congratulate all of the 2012 SYSCO trophy winners at this year's annual Awards Party. Also a pat on the back to Jim Shaw for coming up with some very creative Team Awards that can be shared with crew members! And I would also like to thank Jim Sinclair and Tod Bassham for presenting and handing out all of the trophies and door prizes.

The annual SYSCO general meeting and elections were held on Monday night, November 5th. Congratulations and a big thank you to Frank Colistro, who was elected as the 2013 SYSCO Commodore and Ryan Rodgers, who was elected as Secretary! I would also like to thank all of the existing officers and program chairs that are staying on and welcome the new program chairs. We are still looking for a Social chairperson for 2013. The complete list of 2013 officers and chairpersons can be found below in the minutes.

The next SYSCO board meeting on Dec. 3 will also be a special general meeting to ratify changes in membership dues that were voted on by the board at the November meeting. Keep an eye out for a notice from Bill Sanborn outlining the proposed changes.

The 2013 Portland Boat Show is just around the corner! We need Boat Show Booth Volunteers! Put



in a couple of your SYSCO Volunteer Hours and get free admittance to the Show! Please follow the sign up link on the [sycosailing.org](http://sycosailing.org) home page or you can go directly to <http://vols.pt/aftN8U> to pick your time. Pick up your free entry at Will Call just before your scheduled booth time.

Fair Winds!  
Michael Nance, Commodore  
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# Why We Race

By Tod Bassham

The wife sobbed quietly into a Kleenex. “It started out so innocently,” she confessed to the divorce lawyer. “At first, it was once a week, but then he started wanting more.”

The lawyer clucked sympathetically, covertly checking her watch and wondering how many times she had heard the same story, of men behaving badly.

“Soon it was twice a week, sometimes three,” the wife continued. “He began subscribing to magazines with pictures of beautiful . . .” She choked back a sob. “And then—he found *her* in a Craigslist ad.” The lawyer shook her head with secret satisfaction, mentally adding an extra zero to the usual retainer.

“Let me guess,” the lawyer asked sarcastically, “He starting buying her expensive items.”

The wife looked startled. “How did you know? Yes, he tried to hide it, but every month the credit card statement had hundreds of dollars in charges at West Marine.” She plunged on. “But the worst part is when he would come home from a night out with *her*, stinking of beer and bilge water, and boast that he had . . . spliced her mainbrace.” She shuddered. “I don’t know what that means, and I don’t want to know. He kept urging me to go out with them together to . . . to . . . wherever they go on Tuesday and Thursday nights.” (“That’s disgusting,” the lawyer murmured.) “He wanted me to do things I’m sure no self-respecting woman would do, to ‘trim the jib’ as he put it. At last I told him he had to choose between

his family and her, and now . . . here I am.” The long-suffering wife buried her face in her hands.

At that precise moment her husband was at the helm of his beloved sailboat, approaching the windward mark, tight on the starboard layline. The bow of his boat edged past the stern of the boat ahead. “Overlap!” he screamed, trying to squeeze between the mark and the line of boats trying to round it. Grudgingly, the outside boat made room. “Hoist the thing-a-ma-jiggy!” he screamed at his crew as they rounded the mark. The spinnaker flew out of its bag and promptly wrapped itself around the forestay, leaving the boat bobbing helplessly. The rest of the fleet popped their chutes and headed downwind for the finish. “Aaaaaah!” screamed the skipper to no one in particular, “Last place, *again!*”

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It’s an all-too-familiar story. The man-boy who loves to race, the woman who doesn’t understand, and the boat that comes between them.

And it begs the question: Why do we race? To many sailors of the male persuasion, this is not a serious question. Their answer, to the extent they think about it, is a simple syllogism: (1) our manly forebears hunted mastodon during the ice-ages; (2) there are no more mastodon for us to hunt; (3) therefore, we race sailboats. Logical as this argument seems, most academic scholars find it unpersuasive. For one thing, it fails to account for the established fact that many sailors of the female persuasion also like to race,



despite no known connection to mastodon hunting. Indeed, these days the racer in the family is often the female partner, with the male partner sitting at home watching NASCAR racing or whatever it is that men who don't race do with their spare time. With a slight change in pronouns, the above divorce-court story would still ring true.

But this brings us no closer to answering the question: *why* do we race? For mysterious reasons, *some* people like to race sailboats, and *some* people (ok, the vast majority of the seven billion people on planet earth) do not. How can nearly seven billion people be so wrong? Or—now, here's a crazy thought—maybe sailboat racers have got it wrong. Maybe people who race sailboats are like the mastodon: hairy, dim-witted and doomed to extinction.

Let's try to examine sailboat racing objectively, rationally, without the accumulated glamour and sentiment, and try to understand whether sailboat racers are truly mental defectives, or merely thundering idiots.

Possession of a sailboat is, of course, the *sine qua non*<sup>1</sup> of sailboat racing. Right out of the box we've stumbled on the crux of the problem. Sailboats are concave vessels of fiberglass and steel, into which the

<sup>1</sup> A Latin phrase, which Wikipedia translates roughly as "that, without which, there is not." No idea what that means. Still, it is impressive to reflect that, while our proto-English ancestors were sitting around in some dim Teutonic wood picking lice out of each other's hair, the Romans were inventing cool, pithy phrases that are still being used more than 2,000 years later in obscure sailing club newsletters.

hapless owner pours money until the boat sinks or the owner goes bankrupt, whichever comes first. Owning a racing sailboat is even more fiscally insane, because to stay competitive the owner must hire NASA engineers to construct space-age carbon spars and high tech sails. Due to a nationwide shortage of useful idiots willing to buy racing sailboats, entire social ecosystems evolve around those few individuals deep-pocketed and/or clueless enough to buy one. As soon as the proud new owner docks his carbon-fiber beauty, a cloud of parasites will descend, parasites who know it is far better to sail OPB (Other People's Boats) than to commit the financial suicide of raceboat ownership. Each week these smiling leeches show up, beer in hand, ready to line the rail or heave on a halyard in a pathetic attempt to live the sailing life without actually owning a sailboat. And each week, the desperate owner—on the verge of bankruptcy and a mental breakdown—abuses the crew in a spectacular tirade of invective, audible on both banks of the Columbia River. This sick, co-dependent relationship is considered the norm in the game of sailboat racing.

But what exactly is the "game" of sailboat racing? Let's observe it step by step. Every race begins the same, with a bunch of sailboats milling randomly around behind the start line—like paramecium in a petri dish—trying not to crash into each other. A five-minute clock is running. Just seconds before the five minute horn sounds, the racers charge the start line. One boat crosses the start line in the lead. And ... that's it. The race is over, for all practical purposes. The winner of 99.9 percent of all sailboat races is the







boat that first crosses the start line. The rest of the race consists of simply chasing the leader, hoping against hope that the sheriff's deputies will repossess the leader's heavily mortgaged boat before it crosses the finish line.

At this point, on the first windward leg, the unbiased observer will recognize a glaring flaw in the game of sailboat racing. Namely, sailboats are powered by the *wind*. Wind is a notoriously unreliable element, constantly shifting direction and velocity, and frequently disappearing entirely, or blowing precisely from the direction toward which one wishes to go. Indeed, it seems as if race committees go out of their way to set courses against the wind, which requires slow and laborious tacking back and forth. It is actually considered good form for race committees to set the course square to the wind, which means at some point a direct downwind run, the slowest possible point of sail. What kind of crazy sport organizes itself around the concept of going as slow as possible?

And going where, exactly? Mostly in arbitrary circles. The race course is divided into several legs by *marks*, or orange balloons floating on the water, which the boats must round in a certain order. Fundamentally, a sailboat race consists of following the leader around a series of orange balloons, while trying to avoid repossession of your boat by sheriff's deputies. Except for the threat of repossession, this is the essentially same game of follow-the-leader that six-year olds play in the school yard.

But at least going upwind *seems* fast, due to the mystery of apparent wind. After rounding the first or windward mark the boats deploy their spinnakers—large, temperamental, difficult-to-control downwind sails—and begin the downwind run (usually accompanied by renewed streams of invective from the skipper, discussing the ancestors of the OPB that just botched the spinnaker launch). Because most downwind runs on the river are against the current, the progress upstream is excruciatingly slow, despite the extra sail area and the occasional excitement of a death roll as a gust comes through. Even the most geriatric spectator could walk faster over the ground than most non-planing keelboats can sail upstream against the current. Actually, a geriatric spectator would probably expire of old age before the first boat reached the leeward mark. Of course, this presumes that sailboat racing *has* spectators, which it doesn't outside the America's Cup, because it is too damn slow and boring to watch.

At long, long last, the leader will round the leeward mark and cross the finish line, while the rest of the fleet, deeply humiliated, engages in a bitter Darwinian struggle to avoid being the boat that is DFL (dead frickin last). Then all teams head back to the docks, the euphoric winner to collect a little plastic trophy, the envious losers to applaud with gritted teeth. And then both winners and losers proceed to consume massive quantities of beer.

And here, maybe, is one answer to why we race. After consuming enough beer, it is possible to forget





the miserable race performance, the pending boat foreclosure, the spouse at home checking his/her watch, the cubicle waiting for you at work tomorrow. By the end of the night, we racers have piled into the winner's cockpit, and are sitting with arms around each other's shoulders, singing songs, and telling outrageous lies about what great sailors we are. The differences that divide us—owners/OPBs, women/men, winners/losers, republicans/democrats/libertarians/rastafarians—all seem to disappear. We are simply sailors. And for reasons that defy rational explanation, this simple fact makes us very happy.

Tomorrow will come, with its bills to pay, bosses to placate, diapers to change, marriages to save. Someday, even all that will be gone, and we will exist only in memories and fading trophies on the wall. But tonight we are with our friends and competitors, sailors all, drinking a last beer and singing a last song.

To summarize our observations: sailboat racing is a fiscally ruinous, sado-masochistic exercise in prolonged tedium, punctuated at long intervals by death rolls, t-bonings, and other moments of extreme terror. It causes grown men and women to regress into six-year-olds, playing a slightly more complex version of follow-the-leader around the buoys. And yet—despite all that—sailboat racers return week after week, month after month, year and year, devoting enormous amounts of time, money, energy and passion to the sport we love. It makes no sense, and yet in this crazy world nothing else seems to make as much sense.

So why do we race? Perhaps there is no universally satisfying answer, but here is a plausible one: We love sailboat racing because it makes us regress into six-year olds. At that age, we are keenly alive, possessed of a sense of wonder, and utterly fearless. Nothing seems more important than those games we play in the schoolyard, with trusted friends and the bitter enemies of the moment. The entire world feels bright and glowing with promise, the wind is at our backs, and we know that we are beginning a long voyage with our friends toward unknown shores. As adults, is there anything that we won't do to keep that feeling alive in our hearts? In sailboat racing, we remember that feeling. We feel it as the boats charge the start line, in a well-executed tack, in a crowded mark rounding, in a critical spinnaker gybe, in a tight finish, in the camaraderie of the cockpit. We are intensely alive in the moment, and we ask for nothing more.

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The sailor returns home from the race, and tiptoes upstairs to check on the children. Her six-year-old is still awake, and asks sleepily, "Mommy, when can I go racing with you?" An answer is murmured, and the blanket retucked. Her husband is reading in bed, and he places a bookmark into a well-thumbed copy of *Racing Tactics*, as his wife turns out the light and slips into bed.

"Good race?" he asks.

She smiles happily in the dark. "Is there any other kind?"



# SYSCO November 2012 Meeting Minutes

## From the Board

The meeting was held on November 5, 2012, at Elmer's Delta Park.

Present were: Michael Nance, Warren Dalby, Tod Bassham, Jan Burkhart, Bill Sanborn, George Brown, Ryan Rodgers, Frank Colistro and Gary Bruner.

Michael Nance began the meeting at 7 p.m. sharp. Introductions ensued, and chat about Danish Marine being purchased by Tim and Victoria Lessley. Jerry Miller will stay on, as will other employees. Frank explained that his bandaged hand was a result of bullet 'splatter' at the Police gun range. Be more careful, Frank!

## Election of Officers for 2013

Bill Sanborn and Gary Bruner both declined nomination. Frank Colistro was nominated Commodore.

Ryan Rodgers was nominated for Secretary.

The slate of candidates for voting positions was unanimously passed. They are:

Commodore: Frank Colistro  
Vice Commodore/Race Captain: Warren Dalby  
Rear Commodore: Michael Nance  
Treasurer: Tod Bassham  
Secretary: Ryan Rodgers



Additionally, chairperson duties were filled as follows:

Newsletter: Petra Gilbert  
Membership: Jan Burkhart  
Program: Gary Bruner  
Pancho Engineer: Gary Bruner  
Webmaster: Steven Nance.

Congratulations and good wishes offered to new board members and chairpersons.



We still have openings for several positions, including Social Chair, and will look to fill those positions from the “Volunteer Interest” list compiled as people sign up for SYSCO membership. Michael will be checking with Regatta Network to make sure that volunteer interests are required as a condition of membership.

## Reports

Treasurer Tod Bassham had no spread sheet this month, but reported that our current bank balance stands at approximately \$4,500 dollars. Tod reported that he's of the opinion that our current financial status is not sustainable, as we took in roughly \$15,000 this year while expenses came to roughly \$20,000. Our reserves are rapidly dwindling. Much discussion ensued about ways to cut expenses, including doing away with the printed membership book and going totally online with it. Scott Stevenson will help with that for next year, and has some cost cutting ideas. Also discussed were ideas for a less expensive Awards party: a different venue, different food options, returning to 'pickle dish' awards instead of 'practical' trophies, and whether or not we should have a band or a DJ. Also discussed was whether non-members should pay slightly more for a ticket, since the club subsidizes a good portion of the dinner and party. No action was taken on any of these ideas at this time. What was decided was that there should be membership dues increase from \$85 to \$100, with entry fees going up to \$50 for a single event, or \$55

for non-PIYA members. This was passed, but must await final approval at the December Board Meeting, as per the bylaws. Bill Sanborn agreed to write up a notice for an email blast explaining the By-Law Change, and the need for members to attend the December Board Meeting to vote on the changes.

Thinking was that a \$15 increase (about two six-packs of beer) was a relatively minor increase and would help mitigate cuts to racing, beer and food at social events, or major cuts to our Awards program, etc. By comparison, CYC has a river racing only membership for \$75, but that includes just one summer series as opposed to SYSCO's Spring and summer. There was a bit of discussion about lower membership dues for those who take on extensive volunteer duties, but no action was taken.

Membership Chair Jan Burkhart reports that SYSCO has one new member, Jim Severs of Camas with a Pearson 26. Welcome Jim! Jan says we currently have 127 members and collected \$10,200 in membership dollars. Several of those memberships are Associate members.

Race Chairman Warren Dalby had little to report except to remind us all that SYSCO will be working with PYC on the Opening Day Regatta next season.

Pancho Chair Gary Bruner reported that Pancho is snug as a bug in a rug for winter.

Program Chair Randall Poff has resigned. New Chair Gary Bruner will plan to attend the OCSA meeting





next week to get up to speed on a new program idea. It is hoped that clubs will host a program quarterly, invite other clubs, and thereby increase attendance.

### **Old Business**

The Awards Party was considered a success by most everyone in attendance. Jim Shaw is to be commended on very creative “team” awards this year, and the food was pronounced very good by most. There was an issue with the caterer with regards a large tip they expected but SYSCO had not budgeted for. A much smaller tip was paid instead, but we made no friends with the caterer, evidently.... There was mixed reaction to the DJ. A few people enjoyed some dancing, though those who wanted to visit longer were drowned out. More discussion will need to happen before the next banquet in terms of what is the best ‘music’ decision.

### **New Business**

With regards next year’s Awards party, several changes were suggested, as noted above, but no action taken.

We confirmed that the charge to rent Pancho by outside groups such as OWSA would now be \$50 per outing, in light of increased fuel, moorage, and the cost of doing business.

The increase was passed, but needs confirmation/approval at the Dec. 3 meeting.

Tod Bassham is putting together the SYSCO ‘swag’

basket to be raffled off at the OCSA Awards Party this Saturday night, November 10, at PYC. He’ll include a free membership to SYSCO. OCSA has asked for set up and take down help. Tod, Warren, and Gary have agreed to show up at 2 PM and assist with set up. Jan Burkhart will call several SYSCO members to try to get 2 folks to help with clean up after.

The next OCSA meeting will be on Nov. 13, 2012, at 6:30 p.m. Warren Dalby is our representative to OCSA.

The Portland Boat Show always needs volunteers to man/woman the SYSCO booth. There will be sign up through VolunteerSpot.com. Michael will do a mass email with a request for helpers. Even though a number of people did not take advantage of the free sailboat ride raffle we conducted last year at the Boat Show, a number of members expressed the thought that it was a good idea and would be willing to sign up again. Gary Bruner will again coordinate that effort and will be looking for volunteers to take ‘winners’ out for a sail next spring or summer. Any suggestions for how this could work better could be sent to Gary at molika@teleport.com

The meeting was adjourned shortly after 8 p.m.

Submitted by interim Secretary, Gary Bruner.

(All Newsletter submissions are due to Petra Gilbert (petra@dillyworks.com) by the end of the day Friday, November 9, 2012. Photos in high res JPG format are particularly encouraged.



# I Hate This Time of Year

By Dave Paligo,

I Hate this time of year, the morning chill has returned, the leaves are falling, the sporadic rain has returned and all that I can see is the end of the sailing season and a long gray winter stretching out before me.

Looking back on the 2012 Racing/Sailing season, many changes have taken place with this rapidly growing Merit 25 Fleet...

February found us holding classes on Sailing Rules, Boat Handling, Pyramid of Racing, as well as Tactics and Strategy. By early March, several Merits were in the water and beginning to practice, trying to remove those winter cobwebs before the season opening "Frostbite Regatta."

In April, we put nine Merit 25s to the start line in the SYSCO Spring Series; many of the boats had new crew-members and a couple of the skippers had very little race experience. With this competitive Fleet, it soon became evident that teams must know, understand and execute the lessons we were learning in our winter classes.

In June, we had five Merits enter in the first Merit Mayhem Madness (3M) and Summer Solstice Regatta. The fleet invited Merit 25 skippers from around the country to come and race our boats for some one-design action and two skippers took up that offer. Friday's "*Merit Mayhem Race*" was especially





interesting as everyone swapped crewmembers to different positions on different boats; the race had light winds and rain. Saturday's "*Merit Madness Race*" had a variety of wind conditions, a squall that brought high winds & a heavy downpour of rain, followed by a dead calm that left us anchored and socializing on the water. Both days of racing ended with our typical Merit 25 style of socializing at the docks while discussing the weekend events.

During the SYSCO & CYC Summer Series, we put 7 Merits to the start line, crewmembers were honing in on teamwork and boat handling skills, skippers were working on tactics required for the competition and all the teams were looking for that "First Place Horn" and being able to fly the coveted Merit 25 Meritorious Performance checkered flag. Finally, two Merits participated in the RCYC Long Distance Race, and three in the PYC Robert M. Smith Memorial Regatta.

As I write this, I'm reflecting back to our race season, I thought of the countless little bits of knowledge we took for granted as we prepared the boat, but what really stands out to me was that after every race, the post-race socializing reflected what crews were doing to improve their teamwork, which then improves the competitiveness of the fleet. After only a few years of fleet building, we've just added our 11th Merit 25 and we continue to see sailors interested in these sailboats, not only for the boat performance, but because they have heard that the Columbia River Merit 25 fleet

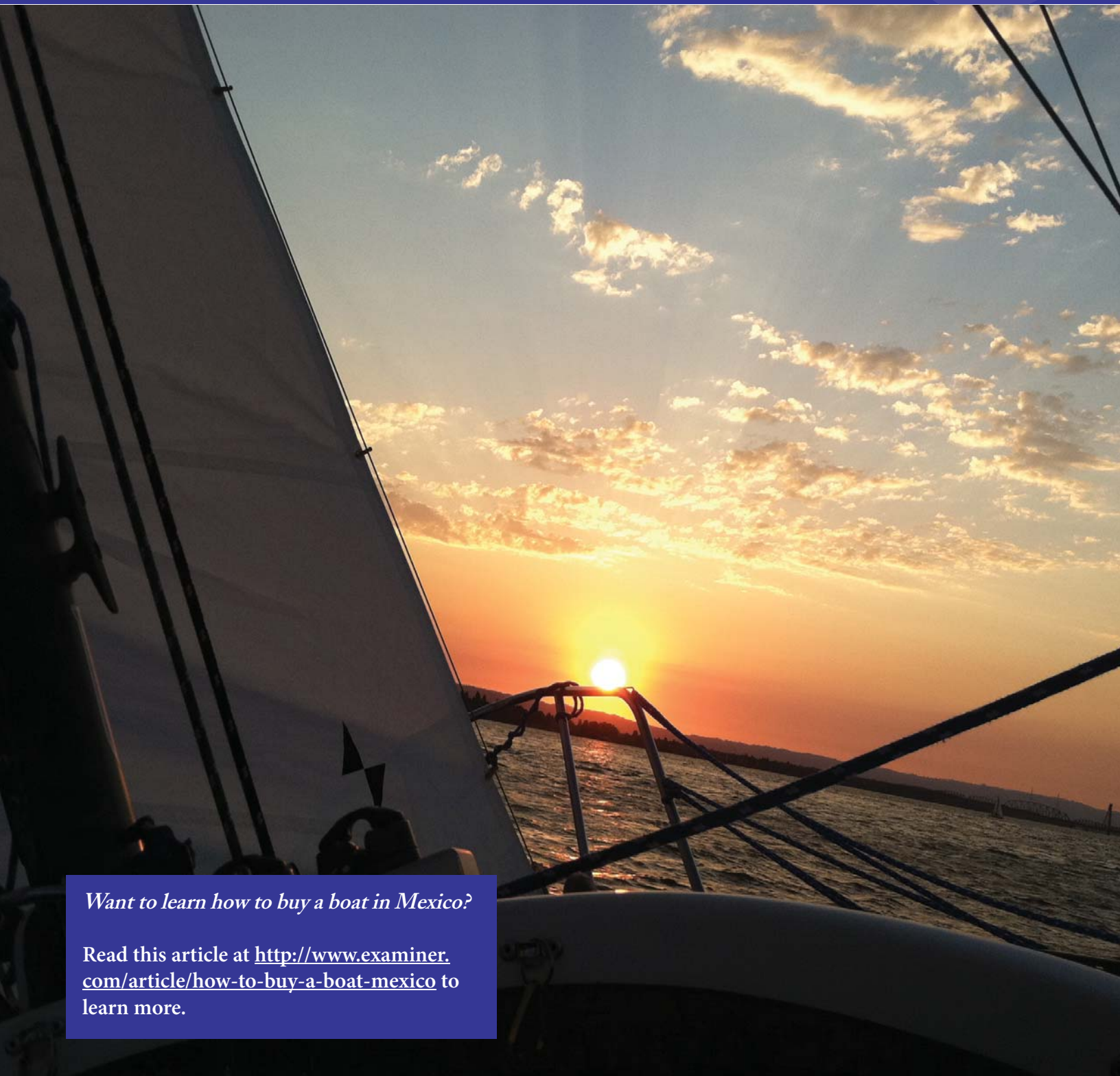
is social, friendly, supportive of new racers, and yet at the same time highly competitive

We are already looking forward to the 2013 race season and the fleet hopes to host the second annual 3M race and who knows, maybe trailer some boats up to Puget Sound for Whidbey Island Race Week or to Astoria for the YBYC Bridge to Bridge Race.

- David Paligo (Merit 25 Fleet Captain)







*Want to learn how to buy a boat in Mexico?*

Read this article at <http://www.examiner.com/article/how-to-buy-a-boat-mexico> to learn more.

