THE GAME PLAN

Effective Team Racing demands an organized, goal oriented approach. A game plan from which all decisions will be made that may arise on the race course. The team that has a plan and can execute it on the water will consistently perform better than the team that always finds itself in tactical predicaments.

The key to success is knowing what your current combination is and what moves should be taken to change an opportune situation into a winning combination. This means that all team members must know their current combination and accordingly, know the corresponding moves to position themselves to attack and achieve the desired winning combination. A knowledgeable, practiced team will have a game plan, manipulate their competitors, and take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Typically, a game plan will consist of a pre-race/start objective; a first beat goal; specific moves for the reaches, depending on existing combinations, to strengthen winning combinations or prep for the final beat; and lastly, a firm goal of a specific combination to work toward on the final beat. Without a solid combination passing the final leeward mark, the final beat may see many changes of combinations until the finish. Team effort to accomplish one of the solid combinations on the final beat is crucial. To better understand this race course segmented game plan consider the following strategy for team 'NO WORRIES':

The goal of the pre-race/start is to have a better position on the line than one's opponents. Just like fleet racing; get a good start! After the start, everyone must go as fast as they can; sail fast and go the right way. The goal of the first beat for each boat is to try to be first at the weather mark. Team 'No Worries' will think about that Team Racing stuff after the first beat. The reaches will be the time to consolidate any gains made on the first beat. If there's a 1/3 combo, they"ll concentrate on trying to squeeze out the opponent in second place so that they have a solid 1/2. The final beat is the time to maintain a winning combo. If they're in a losing combo, aggressively attack, execute passbacks, or fool the opponents into slowing themselves down with a tacking duel. Meanwhile, teammates can get ahead of opponents, setting up the passback which will consolidate gains into a winning combination. All efforts throughout the race may be foiled or rewarded by the combination achieved when the finish line is crossed.

No game plan is effective unless all teammates know the plan and understand how it is accomplished on the water. Having a game plan gives direction to all team members at all times. To ensure all teammates see the same scenario and are working toward the same combination, communication is critical. For

instance, a team captain might yell out a particular combination as teammates near the leeward mark to remind them of what their appropriate action should be approaching the mark. **Communication is the vital link in maintaining a concerted team effort to obtain a winning combination.**

GAME PLAN PHILOSOPHIES

Different teams matched against different skill levels require varying game plans. A team that wants to take control early might want to aggressively attack their opponents during the pre-race engagement. Aggressive controlling actions will intimidate the competition. On the other hand, a team that is confident that their boat speed alone will prove them victorious across the finish line, might not want to Team Race at all. If the team is confident that they will beat their competition on speed alone, they might want to use fleet race tactics and stay away from alternative penalty *360's* or potentially risky protests. Although this strategy does not seem to be in the true spirit of Team Racing, it can be effective to minimize threatening losses, losses that may cost the trophy!

One philosophy proposed by U. C. Irvine Team Racer, Jamie Malm, is to stop the race whenever your team is losing. In other words, stop at the mark and condense the race, hoping for a favorable outcome. An example of this might be to have the person in second place, of a 2/4/6 combination, stop at the reach mark and try to make a passback with the team mate in fourth. This is sound team racing philosophy but should be quantified as a component of Team Racing strategy, such as the goal of obtaining a winning 2/3/4 combination from a 2/4/5 combination.

Another philosophy, not necessarily in the spirit of Team Racing, is an attempt to draw rule infringements (fouls) or protests from the opponents. Team Racing history is scarred with these types of races in which an inferior team has taken advantage of potential protest situations whenever possible, knowing that their only hope of victory would be to draw fouls from the other team and win in the protest room. This manual does not support that type of 'draw penalty' oriented gameplan.

Execution of a solid game plan is contingent upon all team members understanding the current combination. This is accomplished by simply seeing it on the water or being signaled the same information by a team mate. Once all team members know their current combination, they must also know what their next move will be, whether to maintain or attack from their position in the combination. This manual is all about accomplishing your game plan. The paragraphs to follow will introduce a foundation from which you may develop sound Team Racing strategy - a versatile game plan.

A solid Team Racing game plan is based on the fact that the team is made up of individual members who each think and act independently to contribute toward the common team goal, a particular winning combination. This manual is based on achieving and maintaining one of three solid winning combinations:

1/2/X 2/3/4 1/4/5

As will be demonstrated, all other combinations can be converted to one of these three solid winners. Another strength of these particular combinations is the difficulty they pose for an opposing team to break through. Therefore, this manual will suggest that these three solid combos be the core of your team's game plan.

THE COMBINATIONS: 1/2/X & 2/3/4 & 1/4/5

Knowing what combinations to work for is the key to success. This is no simple task when considering three on three Team Racing. There are ten different winning combinations and ten other losing combinations. One strategy within Team Racing is to add up your current combination within the race. If your team's positions add up to less than the position total of the opposition, you're winning. A simple rule is that if your positions add up to ten or less points, you have a winning combination. Determining whether you are winning or losing should have a definite impact on your team's Team Racing strategy. With this strategy in mind, you have to be a good mathematician and quick decision maker.

If it seems difficult to remember that 2,3,5 is a winning combination and 1,4,6 is a losing combination, it only gets worse with the introduction of *penalty flags*. What used to be a workable list of numbers to remember, becomes unreasonable with the addition of penalty flags. Perhaps even more importantly, there is little time to spend thinking about the math of your team's positions. If an opponent approaches, there is no time to waiver over the decision for action. By the time you have added up your team's combination, the opportunity has probably passed and the opponent has gone by or taken advantage of your hesitation. This dilemma of too many combinations to remember and not enough time to compute the addition of your team's positions and *penalty flags* leads us into one of the most important points to be developed in this manual.

Of all the winning combinations, there are a few which are more stable than the others. Once one of these stable combinations is achieved, the opposing team finds great difficulty in trying to break through the solid combination. **The golden path to victory lies in the pursuit to achieve one of the following stable combinations: 1/2/X (X represents any other position), 2/3/4, and the 1/4/5.** Once a team realizes the strength within

these combinations, they become the focus around which their entire Team Racing strategy should revolve. Contemporary Team Racing strategy is the pursuit of these three solid combinations: 1/2/X , 2/3/4 , and 1/4/5.

GAME PLAN-1/2/X

The experienced Team Racer understands why these combinations are so stable. Let's consider the 1/2/X. When one team controls first and second place, it is very difficult for the opposing team to break through. If first and second play their race right they will cover third and fourth, balancing their respective pairs so that they ensure they finish first and second across the finish line. *Balance* is important if first and second split sides, covering their opponents, and then come back to the middle further up the beat. If a windshift occurs, one of the pairs will benefit and be further upwind. This means that the windwind boat in the further upwind pair will have to slow her pair to regain *balance*. *Balance* is illustrated in **Figure 5**. In situation I, first and second are evenly ahead of opponents in third and fourth. In situation II, the pairs become unbalanced by a wind shift favoring port tack. Therefore, it is up to the teammate in first place on port tack to slow down/balance back the opponent who has now moved into second place as a result of the wind shift.

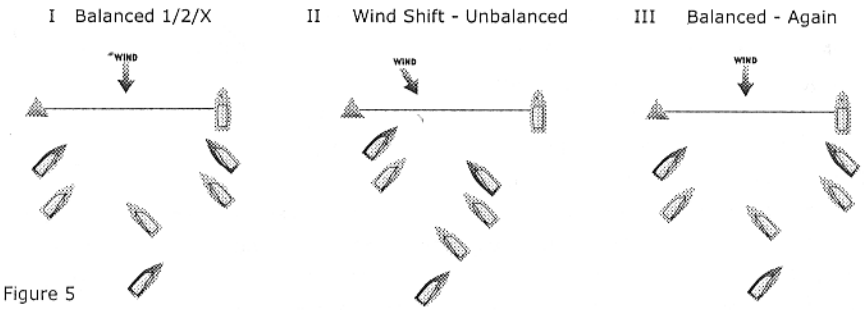


Figure 5

If the teammate in first does this effectively, a renewed *balance* shall be achieved, as in situation III. If the pairs were to become unbalanced, and a 1/3/X combination were to result, another option would be to place second between the 1/3 *passback*, converting the dangerous 1/3/X combination back to the stable 1/2/X.

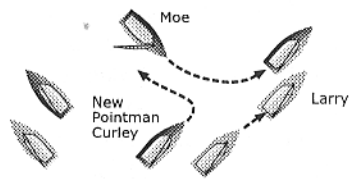
The 1/3/X combination is quite volatile. Take the example of 1/3/6. This means the opposition has 2/4/5. Whichever team performs a *passback* first will convert its score to one of the stable combinations. Just as the 1/3/6 team hopes to perform a *passback* on second and convert to a 1/2/X, second and fourth of the opposing team also hope to make their own *passback* on third, converting to a 2/3/4.

GAME PLAN-2/3/4

This brings us to the 2/3/4, the second of the three solid combinations. This combo is quite possibly the strongest when executed properly. The advantage is in that the three boat 2/3/4 combo only has to keep two boats, 5 and 6, behind them. On the other hand, the opponent in the first place position, of the 1/5/6 combo must slow down one or more of the 2/3/4 combo. When first tries to do this, she places herself in the dangerous dilemma of the opponents taking her first place position. All the 2/3/4 combo has to do is stay close and ensure that 5/6 stay behind them.

The 2/3/4 represents a true Team Racing challenge: if one teammate gets in trouble and loses an opponent, it is up to the third teammate, who is not covering fifth or sixth, to be there to regain control over the opponent. Once this control is regained, it is necessary to slow the opponent and bring one's own team mate up to speed and back into position. While she is slowing one opponent, the teammate who covers the other opponent must slow that boat down so as to *balance* each of the pairs and push back fifth and sixth behind the struggling teammate. Larry, Moe, and Curley demonstrate this in figure 6. The 2/3/4 can be visualized as a powerful triangle with two corners covering their respective opponents and the third, the point man, remaining on station, between the two teammates, waiting to come to aid of a teammate who has lost control over a matched opponent.

II 2/3/4 Pointman Change



I 2/3/4 Power Triangle

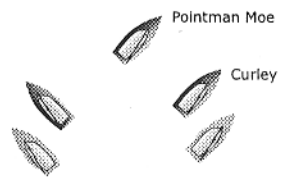


Figure 6

GAME PLAN-1/4/5

The third of the three stable combinations is the 1/4/5. The strength of this combination lies in the goal for the first boat to win the race. She must go fast and do the right things, like not getting fooled into a tacking duel and potentially losing her first place position. Fourth and fifth just need to keep the opponent in sixth behind them. With an unsuspecting 2/3/6, fourth and fifth will have an easy time trading off tacks to ensure sixth remains behind them. The danger lies in the potential for opponents in second and third to drop on fourth and fifth and push them back, bringing up their teammate who was in sixth, moving her into fourth, consolidating their gains into the 2/3/4 combination.

TOTAL DESPERATION

Not all hope is lost with a 1/5/6 combination. Although the opposing team has achieved the solid 2/3/4, the race is not over until you cross the finish line. With a 1/5/6, fifth and sixth should first try to fool one of the opponents into slowing down so that fifth or sixth may move ahead of that opponent and then perform a 4/6 *passback* with the other teammate to effect a 1/4/5 combination. If fifth and sixth are not having any luck or are well behind, first might begin to feel total desperation. If this occurs, first should try to condense the competitors and hope for a favorable outcome. A condense move might consist of first stopping at the reach mark and forcing the opponents behind to slow down as they cautiously approach first's offensive set up. Hopefully, first will force the opponents into a confusing rounding, while the teammates in fifth and sixth have the opportunity to get closer and maybe even break through. First should not give up her position.

Perhaps an even more desperate situation might be when your team has a 3/4/6 combination. With this scenario, the team has to realize that they must work toward accomplishing the 2/3/4 combination. They do not hold anyone in the first place position so they must work toward the solid combination which does not include having first place. To accomplish the 2/3/4, third or fourth must fool second into going slow or the wrong way so that the other teammate may move ahead of her. With that accomplished, the teammates now in second and fourth, must effect a 2/4 *passback* and then send the passed back opponent to the back. The two teammates ahead must cover their opponents and *balance* them back so that they can bring up their teammate who was in sixth. With all this accomplished, the team can achieve a solid 2/3/4 and win the race.

This manual stresses the importance of three combinations, 1/2/X, 2/3/4, and the 1/4/5. Once one of these is achieved, it becomes very difficult for the losing team to convert to a winning combination. While reading the paragraphs which follow, it is important for the reader to always hunt for ways to convert from losing combinations to winning combinations, or more importantly, coordinate with teammates to convert to one of the three stable combinations. The rest of this manual is based on converting losing combinations to one of the three stable combinations and maintaining position to ensure victory across the finish line. Established Team Racers always have a game plan -be it certain moves to convert positions or just manipulating the opponents so that they have no chance to break through.