

APRIL 2024

FROM THE FRONT  
RESTARTING WITH  
THANK YOU

FROM THE FLEETS  
GETTING A GOOD  
START IN A SYSCO  
RACE

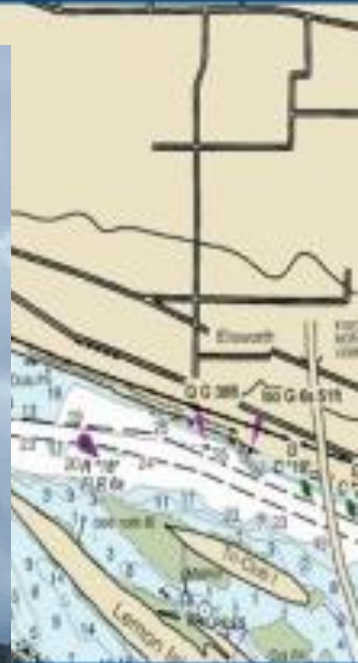
RACE REPORT  
THE REAL WORK

ON THE RIVER  
FREE BOWL OF  
SOUP RESCUES A  
CREW OVERBOARD



SMALL YACHT SAILING CLUB OF OREGON

# STARTING LINE



*Queen Albert Ready to Retrieve COB, March 24 COB Race*

## Restarting With Thank You

Our newsletter has been charitably referred to as “spotty” these last months. I’ll take full responsibility. Rick Samuels, to his immeasurable credit, has not only been a diligent and creative editor for several years, but an appropriately pesky prodder to those of us who need to be poked repeatedly to get him articles and photos. He’s done his job well; I’ve done mine poorly. Writing and driving the publication has taken a back seat to a number of intrusions into the process and, well, I gave them higher priority than I should have. *Mea Culpa*. I’ll commit to doing better in getting these out the door every month – hold me accountable.

On to the meat. As we dive into the first full month of racing, it’s appropriate to note the hard work of your fellow SYSCO members that has occurred since the last publication. The following list is not exhaustive but rather just a tip of the iceberg of what these SYSCO members have done for the club only recently. They have all worked tirelessly not only over the past year, but in most cases for years.

First to come to mind is Carisa Bohus. She’s been dealing with membership and volunteers for a couple of years and with every cycle has suggested changes to the process as well as coming up with new concepts to keep local racing vibrant. The most significant one of late was a suggestion last fall that for major events there be a single point of contact who drives the event. She chose Crew Overboard Challenge (COB) one because she likes the event and two because dealing with crew overboard is an essential skill. She was the primary driver of participation along with help from Bruce Newton and Gregg Bryden and participation was up and the event was a huge success. Thank you Carisa.

Speaking of Bruce Newton, he and Michael Morrissey as well as a slug of Merit folks jumped in and provided race committee and Poncho support for COB. Moreover the Merit fleet is on tap to do early race committee duty for evening series. Thank you.

Oh, and as to Poncho, Bruce and Doug Damm pulled her out of storage early this year with McCuddy’s accommodating the early arrival, did whatever annual maintenance needed doing,

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DENNIS DAMORE – COMMODORE

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and got it revved up to support COB. Both Bruce and Doug do an amazing job all season to ensure that when your turn to do RC is on tap and you step into Poncho, it starts and everything works as intended. Give them both a Thank You when you see them.

Melissa Cearlock has been doing an amazing job of modifying and updating the website. Whenever changes are recommended, she gets them done in record time. And considering website changes, Rock Kent initiated a conversation at the Board level last fall about reemphasizing how each of us as members has a responsibility to support our volunteer race committees. He took on the project of revising the site with new and clarifying information and then followed through with Melissa to lock it in. Thanks to both of you.

And then finally, Gregg Bryden and Jan Burkhart took a deep breath and dug into our two Mail Chimp accounts, SYSCO and OCSA, to figure out how to clean them up from all the bot activity. I've been a Luddite about using Mail Chimp because I thought it was difficult to use and I knew there was considerable cruft in the data. After some Zoom calls and data/Excel work, they were able to sort things out and so look for both SYSCO and OCSA emails that will go a long way to keeping us all informed. Thank you both.

Always looking for additional support for the fleet. Reach out to Carisa through the website to tell us about your skills and availability.

See you on the river,

*Denny Damore*

SYSCO Commodore

# FROM THE FLEETS

Michael Morrissey, OB1 – Merit Fleet

## Getting a Good Start in a SYSCO Series Race



Getting a good start in a SYSCO race is often key to having a good overall race. Ideally, you should be sailing the boat at full speed, close to the starting line and be in a position where you can maneuver and sail on the preferred side of the course. For beginning racers, it can be a chaotic and sometimes frightening time as all the boats in your fleet are coming together in a confined space. At times there can be some jostling of boats, a bit of yelling out rules and general confusion of where the line actually is located. Often, new racers play it safe and stay away from the line unwilling to mix it up with the more experienced racers. It doesn't have to be so. Getting a good start can be one of the more exhilarating moments in a sailboat race and you can build on that to finish a very satisfying race overall. Here are some guidelines that you can use to get that start and get to the front of the fleet.

1. Get out there 30-40 minutes before your fleet start.
  - a. Check wind conditions for your sail combination – genoa or jib?
  - b. Get a feel for the current – very important for Spring races when wind can be light and the current ripping. The easiest way is to sail close to the starting buoy to see if current is strong, medium, or weak. If you have a chance, try to gauge your boat speed forward with the combined wind and current conditions.
  - c. Sail the line to determine a favored end. One way is to go head-to-wind on or near the line and, if your boat is pointed toward one end, then that end is theoretically closer to the windward pin and the favored end. Be sure not to interfere with other fleets during their starting sequence.

# FROM THE FLEETS

Michael Morrissey, OB1 – Merit Fleet

- d. Know the course – write it down on a tape you can attach to the side of the companionway. Go over the course with the crew.
- e. Have a general plan for the first leg of the course. Which side of the course do you want to sail: left, middle, right?
2. Give each of your crew a definitive task for the start.
  - a. Timer – count down from 10 minutes (1 minute intervals), then 30 sec. intervals after 4 minute warning, last minute should be in 10-15 sec. intervals.
  - b. Traffic cop – someone who is looking out for other boats and calling out possible problems. E.g., “Boat X is to leeward and is coming up”.
  - c. Jib trimmer – responds to skipper’s commands for jib or genny; trim to get up to speed or luff to slow down.

Note: they should give information in a steady and loud voice – no panic or crazy questions before the start which may cause confusion.
3. Know your rules and be willing to mix it up with other boats. Most important are:
  - a. Leeward rights over windward boats. Remember “proper course” rules do not apply until after the start so a leeward boat can luff up head-to-wind.
  - b. Barging – although there are no specific anti-barging rules in the Rule Book, a windward boat cannot reach down the line or at the starting buoy and interfere with leeward boats
  - c. Don’t hit the Race Committee boat or you will be automatically DSQ .
4. Concentrate on boat speed immediately after the start – the fastest boat can usually work its way to the front of the fleet and often wins the race.
  - a. Sail trim is important.
  - b. Keep it flat in the puffs in heavy air.
  - c. Keep the boat moving in light air.
5. If you get a bad start be willing to go to Plan B.
  - a. Try to sail in clear air and move to the favored side of the course.
  - b. Tack if necessary – be sure you can tack clear of other boats.
  - c. Stay calm but energized and have fun.

Knowledgeable SYSCO racers know that the buoy end of the line (WA side) is often, but not always, favored in Tuesday-Thursday races. This can cause a traffic jam near the buoy end

# FROM THE FLEETS

Michael Morrissey, OB1 – Merit Fleet

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with only one or two boats getting a good start. Sometimes you are better off toward the middle of the line at the start sailing fast and in clean air.

OK, now that you have the general idea and guidelines memorized and you are determined to get that good start, you need to be aware of the sailing rules that that come into play at the Starting Line. There are two important rules to remember in racing starts. The main one is Rule 11 (on the same tack, overlapped). If you are a windward boat, you must keep clear of a boat to leeward. As there are no constraints on the leeward boat to sail a proper course before the start, they can luff as high as head-to-wind. A yacht that is to leeward and establishes an overlap may luff you above close-hauled prior to the start of the race. So, keep clear of boats to leeward.

Whilst the leeward yacht has right of way, she does have some limitations. Under rule 16.1 she must give the windward boat room to avoid her while changing course (e.g. luffing up). The windward boat must have the ability to fulfil her obligations. The right-of-way leeward boat can't just turn abruptly, not giving the windward boat the opportunity to keep clear. Be aware that the windward boat may have other boats above her which she must also hail to keep clear so she can react to the presence of the leeward boat.

If any part of the boat is over the line when the starting horn sounds, she must return to the starting line and sail completely below the line before she is a legal start (OCSA General Sailing Instructions 11.3). The Race Committee will raise the individual recall flag and attempt to hail her sail number. Failure to hail her number, or failure to hear the hail shall not be grounds of redress. In other words, it's up to the boat to determine whether they are over or not. In case of a General Recall, the warning signal for the recalled class will be made after all the other races have started (GSI 11.4).

The starting area extends 150 feet on both sides of the starting line and 150 foot radius from both ends of the starting line. Boats that are not in the starting sequence (5-minute horn) should avoid the starting area during the starting sequence s of the other fleets (GSI 11.5)

Because of strong currents and lighter winds in the spring there is a local rule (GSI 11.6) that allows a boat that is over the line to use propulsion (motor) to return to the line without penalty as long as the boat does not start for at least 4 minutes after discontinuing propulsion.

A boat that makes contact with the Race Committee boat will be scored DSQ without a hearing (GSI 11.7).

# FROM THE FLEETS

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Michael Morrissey, OB1 – Merit Fleet

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During the Summer Series (and sometimes Twilight) there may be 2 races if wind allows. The Race Committee may display the Second Substitute (with no sound) while boats are finishing (GSI 11.8). Often the course board will be displayed on the starting line side of the Race Committee boat.

Now that you have all that down, there's no excuse not to be on the line, sailing fast when the starting horn goes off. Have a good season.

*Michael Morrissey*

OB1 – Merit Fleet

## SYSCO Needs a Race Captain

SYSCO needs a Race Captain. Why? Simple, we don't have one. Well, we have me sitting in that chair holding down the fort, so to speak, but the reality is that we've needed someone to fill these shoes for a bit.

What does the Race Captain do, you ask? It's primarily an administrative role where the Fleet Captains coordinate their respective fleets to provide race committees for the races, who then "report" to the Fleet Coordinators (the so-called Wranglers) who then report to the Race Captain. Most of the work once all the races get into the schedule on Sailpdx and Regatta Network is simply monitoring the process, sending the check-in and finish sheets to the scorers, and sorting out any issues that crop up with race committee staffing. The Fleet Captains and Race Coordinators do the bulk of the work during the season. To be sure pre-season there is filling out the NOR templates and insuring that Regatta Network postings are done, but once racing starts, the system tends to cruise along. It is not a hard job, does not take hours and hours of commitment, and does not require that you are deeply vested in rules or know scads of skippers and crew. It simply needs a person with a modicum of organizational skill and a willingness to follow through on the systems that are already in place.

It must be mentioned that traditionally the role of Race Captain has been assumed by the person who is the Vice Commodore with the notion that the VC will then move on to the Commodore position. But the SYSCO Bylaws only provide that the VC will be the chair of the Race Committee. Nothing precludes the two roles from being separate. If you are interested in the learning the ropes of the Club and becoming the Commodore, the Race Captain spot is a great training ground. But if you want to simply handle the Race Captain duties and leave the VC role to someone else, so be it. Please don't let the traditional progression of roles get in the way of you stepping into a position that is incredibly rewarding, yes, on occasion frustrating, but also a way to connect deeply with the entire local sailing community. I can attest the job is full of surprises and provides lots of opportunities to make a difference.



# RACING REPORT

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DENNIS DAMORE-INTERIM RACE CAPTAIN

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How much time is required you ask? During the season, truthfully, about an hour or two a week. Pre-season in late fall and early winter, it requires pulling together the race documents for about a dozen races, which requires about 2 hours per series over several months. There is also the monthly Board meeting which is an hour. It all adds up to about 4 hours a month if spread out over the year.

So, that's my pitch. You don't have to have been a fleet captain or a race coordinator to be able to do the job. I've done most of the preliminary work for this year. I'll hold your hand through the rest of the year and into next. This is not even like holding your nose and jumping into the deep end. It's more like wading into the shallows so you can acclimatize yourself to the temperature and depth of the water. I can assure you there is no chlorine to burn your eyes or sharks to nip at toes. We'll be Race Captain partners. Whadda say? Drop a note and let's get started,

See you on the river,

*Denny Damore*

### Free Bowl of Soup:

We are very proud of our team Sunday for successfully pulling off a person overboard recovery while racing the Sailing on Sunday (SoS) series. Started off as a Chamber of Commerce SoS day with sun, lots of boats out, and a nice North/Northwesterly breeze that had the race committee sending us from Buoy #14



downriver to #2, upriver to the virtual "UA" (Upper Airport) and finishing back at #14. The forecast was for a strong Easterly building in the afternoon, which led to a convergence zone over the racecourse with and wind dying as we rounded buoy #2, and the Easterly slowly building and starting to hit us as we were North of the entrance to the Columbia Slough and had fully built further upriver.



Our bow crew noticed something odd ahead of us and quickly realized it was a woman floating in the 38F water (surprised to learn it was that cold after-the-fact). The wind had done a major wind shift, quickly building in intensity and she had fallen off a day sailing boat that had been hit by a gust. As soon as

we realized it was a person, we communicated a Mayday of a Person Overboard on the VHF, doused the jib, started the motor and headed directly to her. The recovery was quick with multiple people marking her position, one person on the radio (once it was clear we were going to be able to retrieve her we called Pan

# ON THE RIVER

## FREE BOWL OF SOUP RESCUE



Pan and cancelled the Mayday call), deploying the LifeSling, dropping her a line and eventually pulling her over the open transom. When she was safely on board, we cancelled the Pan Pan and got her below to warm up. She changed her wet clothes for extra dry ones on board, and one of the crew

hugged her to help warm her up along with some warming packs and blanket. Her husband was able to get the sails down on their boat, but we later learned the throttle cable had torn off, and the motor was disabled, in the process of her falling overboard. Consequently, her husband could not retrieve her. Their boat was 1/4 mile away from her position in the water by the time we retrieved her, and he estimated she had been in the water 10-15 minutes before we saw her.



We then went over to their boat, where her husband threw us a tow line and we towed him back to their club (RCYC). We were later updated that she had warmed up once home, and other than a scraped shin no other physical damage. The Coast Guard was super responsive and even sent the attached text when the urgency was over. We are glad to have been in the right place at the right time!

On the dock at RCYC we watched the racing fleet both struggle and relish in the big Easterly with the Melges 24s seeing over 17 knots in front of us. We were disappointed to miss out in some heavy-air practice (actually debated heading

# ON THE RIVER

## FREE BOWL OF SOUP RESCUE



back out), but the excitement and adrenaline of the rescue experience left us in great spirits and ready to head in for the day.

### Things that went right:

- She was wearing a PFD, it worked, and she stayed calm. She had lost most of her strength by the time we retrieved her. Seemed much longer but was just over 2 minutes after we spotted her until she was on board.
- Luck of being in the right place at the right time to both spot and retrieve the person quickly. There were numerous buoys in the water for RCYC dredging operations, and at first, we thought this might be one of them further downstream until our foredeck realized it was a person.
- Spotters, making sure we did not lose sight of her, and informing the helm of her direction
- Quick thinking by the crew to pull the jib sheet out to use to throw to her as she came alongside the boat
- Solid crew work lowering the sails, readying a throwable, a line, the boathook, getting her on board and warming her up quickly
- Warm blanket and large package of hand/body warmers below

## Kelly (Husband who remained on the boat) writes of his experience:

Susan and I went for a day sail on Sunday, 4 February 2024, in our Etchells Class open-cockpit sloop, Madam Queen. We were not racing. When the wind suddenly and powerfully picked up mid afternoon, we decided to douse our sails and motor to our home marina at the Rose City Yacht Club.

# ON THE RIVER

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## FREE BOWL OF SOUP RESCUE

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I wanted the motor power ready before I dropped the sails. So, as I headed into irons, Susan carefully crawled on to the stern deck to lower our electric motor into the water, as she has done many times. This time, however, a very strong gust heeled Madam Queen way over. Susan reports that the deck fell out from under her, and she dropped feet-first into the water (which was 38 degrees, as reported to me later by Jeff Roberto of the Coast Guard).

I thought I heard Susan yell. I turned and looked for her on the stern deck, but she wasn't there. I spotted her in the water. She was already about 50 meters behind our boat. Immediately I ran onto the foredeck to drop and secure the jib. Then I turned attention to the mainsail, which was luffing violently, with the boom sweeping dangerously back and forth. Time was of the essence, since I had to quickly get back to Susan. I knew she always wore a PFD, so drowning was not my concern, but rather hypothermia was.

After wrestling the mainsail into the cockpit, I jumped back to the helm, and pressed the throttle-on button. There was no response. Despite a number of tries and jiggles, the throttle console failed to show any electrical current. I looked back, and saw the throttle cable was not connected to the electric motor. Crawling out to the stern, I inspected the flopping cable, and discovered that it had been torn off the motor when Susan fell overboard. Despite several attempts to reattach the cable, I couldn't. It was then that I noticed the electrical pins were bent out of alignment and could not be reinserted into the motor.

With the sails down and the motor inoperable, I knew I had little time before Susan would become disabled by the cold. So back in the cockpit I grabbed my tools and tried to straighten the pins. It was futile. I was dead in the water and terrified for Susan.

Looking back toward Susan's last position, I saw what later turned out to be the Swan 42 sailboat Free Bowl Of Soup trailing a yellow Life Line. It was clear that the boat's crew had spotted Susan. She had been in the water perhaps 10-15 minutes. My relief was total. Susan would be saved.

# ON THE RIVER

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## FREE BOWL OF SOUP RESCUE

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The next day I re-armed Susan's PFD. Today I invested in tethers and a jackline. The next step will be to attach crotch straps to our PFDs so they won't ride up under our chins when - no, IF! - we ever decide to go swimming again. As a further safety precaution, and to encourage Susan (a natural and excellent sailer) to continue sailing, I have told her that, should she ever again venture out on the water on Madam Queen, she is forbidden to go out onto the deck, but must remain in the cockpit, tethered, until she wants to.

## **Susan (Person Overboard) writes of her experience:**

I was on the stern of Madam Queen lowering the motor when the boat heeled sharply to port and dumped me off. I went into the water feet first, and my head never went under water. My PFD did its job.

My thoughts, in this order, were: I'm in the water! I have at most about 20 minutes. I don't want to die today. I should keep moving. I should keep my head above water. I should avoid swallowing water.

Then I began dog-paddling and trying to swim.

I think the crew on Free Bowl of Soup saw me before I saw them. I waved but didn't see anyone wave back, but there were three people on the bow looking in my direction. Shortly the boat was closer and I was relieved. Free Bowl approached me slowly on my lee side. When they threw me a cushion (with line attached, I assume) and another stout line, I concentrated on holding onto both. I knew then that I wasn't going to die.

Editor's Note: The video of the rescue can be seen at <https://youtu.be/FFVL7fxKISQ>

# ON THE RIVER

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FREE BOWL OF SOUP RESCUE

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