

Downwind Performance

Sailing the Taipan 4.9 Sloop - an interview with Daniel Van Kerckhof, former Australian Sloop Champion.

The following interview is taken from a post on the Yahoo Taipan Forum.

Q1. You always seem to be in a gust of wind on the downwind legs, how come?

Pressure is the most important thing. Always look for pressure, chase it and get it. When you have pressure stay with it and as it starts to run out gybe back into it and stay with the gust. Don't be afraid to do lots of gybes

Q2. How do you gybe and keep the boat going so well?

Gybe in pressure and into pressure. Keep the hull up before the gybe and roll through it to a hull up after the gybe. It is like a roll tack in a dinghy in reverse.

Q3 Your Windward hull never touches the water, how do you do it?

Practice wild side as much as you can even in the lightest conditions. Practice in chop, if you can do it in choppy water you can do it anywhere. Practice, practice, practice. When you are smooth in the worst of conditions you are fast.

It is all about crew work, the skipper should remain still and the crew does all the balancing. Amy moves for and aft with each gust and moves to lee or windward as required"

Q4. I have seen you overtake Chris Cairns wild siding in 5 Knots, How did you do that?

Learning to do this will tip you over more than anything else. I sit with my body wrapped around the mast and my legs below it. Amy sits way down and on the beam (or in front of it). The main is pulled down hard to the traveler, you go up and get speed and then peel away with it.

Q5. How do you set the main?

I let the traveler out to the toe straps. I then pull the main on hard, almost like a beat and allow for no twist unless there is too much breeze. When a gust comes I drop a foot of sheet, run away and then drag it back on as I can. I never look at the tell tales or the main at all. I just want it to feel fast.

Q6. What about the jib?

Amy plays the jib for each gust and the barber hauler is all the way down to the beam. I don't steer to the jib; I just sail for speed. I don't look at tell tales, I go by feel.

If the boats going I know I am going quick