**Zenda U Notes (Oconomowoc, May 2015)**

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Notes recorded by Bruce Reynolds

**Tacking**: Release the vang before you tack.

Initiate the turn gently: the tiller should never go past the edge of the cockpit. (In a fast turn, your rudder will brake the boat.) Have your tiller grip “thumbs up”. Wait before moving across until the sail is full. Exchange main/tiller behind your back, at the very end, as you sit down.

Drop the board as late as possible. Never drop it before tacking. Perfect timing is if it drops just as you’re head-to-wind. But in a **high** wind, drop it as you start to turn.  **In a light** wind: wait.

Raising the board: When you’re close-hauled. Don’t lose track of the proper angle coming out of the tack. Do the tack, get to speed, hike out, maximize your speed: **then** raise the board.

**When you’re overpowered**: the boat wants to round up – you luff – then head down – yetch! To **depower**: feather it into the wind, a light head up – ease the main. Sail control: 1)hiking comes first; 2)then vang: now you can ease the sail without repowering; 3)use Cunningham only if hiking doesn’t do it; 4)loosen the traveler? Only if you see that you’ll be facing a consistent wind, over a long tack. Use 2” increments.

As you ease the sail, the boom rises. The mast straightens. The sail gets fuller, deeper. This powers up the boat even more. That’s why you also need vang.

**Sail trim:** you should put a black mark on the mainsheet when it is properly close-hauled. Then play with that. At the start: over-trimming can kill you; or under! At the leeward mark: avoid over-trimming. Downwind: the boom should touch the side stay.

**Tuning**: tie the halyard away from the mast, secure it to the forestay. Avoids scratches, and the quiet is a kindness to the neighbors. Rake: 28’ 3” to 3.5”, measured to where the transom and deck meet. Buy a tape measure that has a loop on the end (i.e. the loop is part of the total measure); that makes the measurement precise. Heavier air: up to 4”. If you feel too much helm on the tiller, the mast is too far forward; the boat is trying to round up into the wind. **Sidestays**: tighten them until you can rotate them in just a tight 1” circle. Do this **after** raking the mast. **Tape** the connections: this holds the setting, and avoids cuts and tears.

**Sailing upwind**: be alert for luffing, for other boats, and for angle of heel. Pointing up is 100% relative to the speed of the boat. In a puff: don’t **oversteer**. Ease the sheet (with vang on), steer straight (you can’t point up more than a few extra degrees). **Don’t** pull the tiller towards you (or away); ease the sheet. Always ask: am I sailing towards the mark? Pick a shoreline reference point as a guide to identifying headers and knocks.

Buoy rounding: a)Where’s the wind? “What do we see between us and the mark?” If the wind is left, position yourself to get into it. b)In the last 100 yards, anticipate and avoid bad air; congestions/claiming rights; turbulence in the water. C)Vang off, powered up, because the bad air will depower the boat. D)Coming in on port? Check for where there’s traffic: duck, hold your speed. Speed = maneuverability. Tack a bit early; don’t get pinned. Coming in on starboard? Try tacking a bit early, then doing a short last tack (w/in three boat lengths) if you can avoid other starboard boats by doing that.

Don’t get fixated on “Gotta make the mark” – will lead you to pinch, pinch, pinch and stall out. Avoid this by anticipating. Never sail the boat slow. If you have full speed, there’s a chance to shoot the mark, going almost head to wind. Practice this, to learn how far you can coast.

Practice estimating the lay line. If you have to turn your shoulder and head to check the mark, you’ve gone too far. Use other boats as a reference.

**Downwind:** board down ¼, on the side that you’re sitting on. (If it’s a strong wind, the boat starts to rock: board 1/2-down.) Rule of thumb: if you were hiking upwind, you’ll be on high side going downwind – unless the boom won’t stay against the shroud. Hold the sheet directly: do you feel good pressure? Then you should sail straight on by the lee (BLR: I think this means: straight for the mark, assuming the mark is downwind). If there’s less pressure: bring the boom 2-3” off the stay, trim until you lose 5-7 degrees, head up, after 10 seconds ease back down again. Your top telltale should be coming back at you. **Buoy rounding**: wide and tight. Very little tiller movement. Try to bring the boom over by bringing in the mainsheet, not tossing the boom by hand. Leave some vang on when going downwind: cleated just barely tight. **Jibing**: as soon as the boom comes across, steer back under the boat, so that you end up pointing squarely downwind. When do you extend your tack as you round, and when do you jibe to the other tack? Rule of thumb: if you had a lift as you approached the windward mark, you’ll jibe, because this will give you a lift coming back on starboard tack.

Rounding: If there’s a gate, a choice of marks, think all the way down the course: which mark will I use? Which is closest? Which side of the lake has wind for the return leg? Aim to avoid boats, get clear air. Come around wide and tight: 6 to 7” away from the mark, but round close, don’t let others inside. If your bow enters the 3 boat length circle, and the other boat doesn’t have an overlap, announce that. Routine: 1)Outhaul on. 2)3 BL out, drop the board and start trimming. 3)Round, bringing the sail over by hauling in the main. Goal: a sail that’s barely luffing at all. If you luff, you’re rounding too tight, pulling in sheet too late. 4)Trim, focusing on speed.

You will often come around with other boats ahead of you. I.e., you’re in bad air. If you’re all in a lift, stay in the bad air, wait for the shift, watching the lead boat and trying to tack first.

**Posture in the boat**: sit as far forward as possible. Square (back parallel to the boat). Use a microphone grip on the tiller, with your thumb up, bringing it in to your chest. The “thumbs up” hand position gives you a ‘cleat’ for the main as you drop and pull boards. Have a light touch on the tiller, relaxed.

**Starts**: Two keys to remember: 1)Don’t be in a pack; 2)develop a set “5-minute routine”. Elements of the **routine**: 1)Stay in the “box”: never more than 3 to 5 boat lengths from the line, or 15 boat lengths beyond either end of the line. 2)Do a wind check: come into the wind at the line, with a luffing sail/boom perpendicular to the line, the nose of the boat will point to the favored end. 3)Stand up, tiller between your legs: split the course in half, look for dark water up the lake, use flags on the shore, identify the favored side of the lake, plan to sail that side. 4)Never jibe away from the line; tacking up to the line gives you a wind check. 5)Use extra time to practice your final approach, checking time/distance. 6)In the final 60 seconds: no more maneuvers. Do your final approach.

**Final approach**: don’t pull your windward board up until 30 seconds to go (it is helping you hold your position). Set up 4-5 boat lengths from the line, in a close-haul luff. Never stop. Ease up, haul in, stop-and-go, sashay up to the line. Stay bow-out (20”) with left- and right-side competitors. Know your rights as leeward boat, and assert them. Don’t worry about being over; be aggressive.

Other final approach strategies: 1)Don’t set up and sashay; come up to the line at speed, picking a hole. But in a big group, it is very hard to come through from behind. 2)Come in on port tack, spot a clump of boats, tack below them. Jim Glueck (sp?) says he does this 90% of the time: a late port set-up.