

by Brad Davis

We here assume a dinghy to be a sailboat which can be righted and towed by one or two 2-man powerboats. Normally, these will be sailboats under 20 feet long.

Rendering assistance is separate from race management, but many competitors have come to expect it. If possible, do not assign mark-setting and assistance duties to the same boat.

Recommended equipment on each assistance boat is as follows:

1. A spare 8- to 10-pound anchor with adequate rode.
2. Two 100-foot, half-inch or larger tow lines.
3. One throwable flotation cushion.
4. Pair of pliers to release halyards on hoisted main and jibs.
5. One pair of leather gloves per person. Gloves help avoid rope burns and barbs on halyards or stays.
6. USYRU Hypothermia Card. Review before event, if conditions warrant.

Guidelines for assisting capsized boats are as follows:

1. Circle capsized boat at two boat lengths to ensure that all crew are safe.
2. Ask if assistance is desired. Do not rush in and insist on helping. You could eliminate the crew from competition.
3. If the crew wants aid, ask them how they would prefer to right the boat. New sailors generally do not know the proper method to right their boat; you may have to explain why you want to proceed in a particular way.
4. Approach the capsized boat from the leeward side. Avoid operating motors within 10 to 15 feet of the boat. Watch for floating lines and equipment.
5. While helping one boat, stay alert for other situations where attention is required. Consider safety first, hardware second.
6. Maneuver the boat so that when it is righted, the bow is facing into the wind and the sails are luffing.
7. Before attempting to right the boat, make sure all sheets are uncleated.
8. If the spinnaker is hoisted, remove it from the boat before righting.
9. When righting, slowly raise the mast, holding onto side stays, and allow the crew in the water to balance the boat until ready to sail, bail or be towed. Avoid throwing or pitching up the mast. This could cause loose lines to whip and maybe wrap around arms or necks; also, if it is blowing hard, the boat will capsize in the other direction.

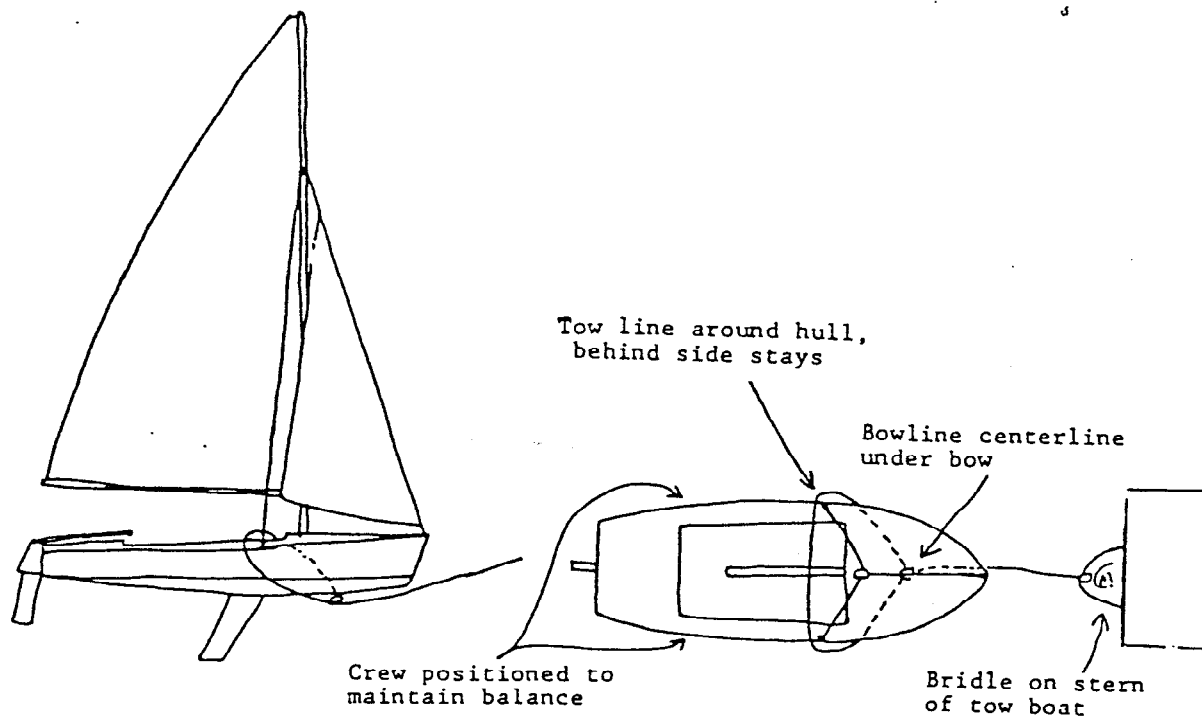
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10. If a catamaran is on its side, secure a line to the hull on the bottom and then run it across the hull that is in the air. Sometimes the only way to right a turtled catamaran is to secure a line to the hull nearest the rescue boat, run it under the other hull, and then across both hulls to the rescue boat. You will probably have to right a catamaran by pulling upwind, as it may not be possible to keep the cat steady across the wind. The sails must be as loose as possible.

If towing is necessary due to breakdown or total swamping, refer to the drawing below and use the following procedure:

1. Secure all lines and equipment. *Do not tow from a cleated sheet!*
2. Using a tow line or the mainsheet, tie a bowline around the hull and behind the shrouds. Leave 1 to 2 feet of slack and center the bowline under the hull.
3. Secure the tow line to a bridle on the tow boat, with the tow boat no more than one to one and a half boat lengths from the boat being towed.
4. Position the crew on the disabled yacht for balance and so the bow will rise and the water flow out.
5. Build speed very gradually, and closely observe the disabled yacht for tendencies to capsize or dive into waves. Watch constantly, because as the sailboat empties of water its stability and towing attitude will change. Maintain towing at the slowest effective speed.

Using this technique, almost any boat can be emptied of most of its water in a short distance, adding stability and reducing bailing time.



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