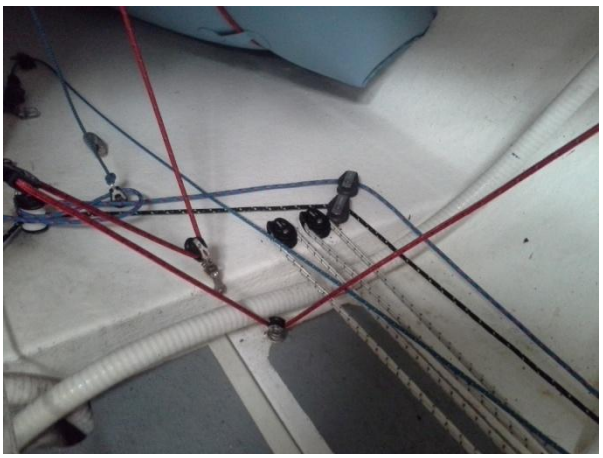
PUMP UP THE KITE!

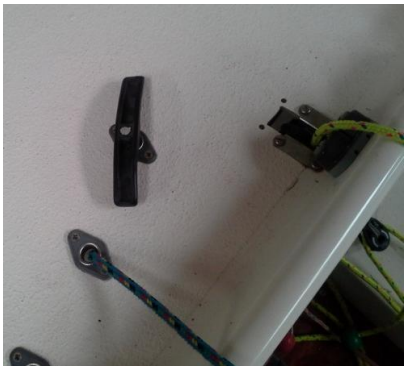
It is important with any boat to sort out the controls to ensure that they work as efficiently and, most importantly the way you want them to. The process can be both frustrating and fun, but it is also an excellent excuse to sit in the pub during the winter months dreaming up ways to improve things! Over the years, we have pinched many excellent ideas from others in the Squib Class, and a few innovations from other classes, but one of the best is our pump action spinnaker halyard hoist and release system. The system offers a number of advantages, the most important being that it allows the helm to hoist the kite quickly, using only one hand, leaving the other free to steer the boat! Here is how we have it set up on *White Magic*.

The halyard is led aft down the centre of the cockpit, along the floor. The centre line is the best place to site the pump action halyard cleat (we use a Northfix). After exiting the back of the mast, the halyard passes through a cam cleat, a flip flop block, a small free block attached by a short length of line to a T handle, and finally through the pump action cleat to a shock cord powered halyard take away system.

To launch the kite, the helm pumps the halyard by pulling and lowering the T handle. Each time the handle is pulled up, the pump action cleat 'locks' and the kite is hoisted. When the handle is lowered the pump action cleat 'unlocks', allowing the take away system to pull the halyard tail through and away. The cam cleat through which the halyard passes stops it running back between each pump. Two or three quick pumps are all that is required to fully hoist the sail. The T handle is held up clear of the floor by a nylon ring attached to a length of shock cord, which in turn passes through a small fairlead fixed to the centre of the main beam and off to one side where it is fixed. We found this refinement essential to prevent the T handle getting tangled up with the mainsheet and anything else on the cockpit floor.



An efficient halyard take away is essential in order for the whole system to work successfully. The halyard is fed around a reverse purchase system which is pulled apart by strong shock cord, so that when the kite is hoisted the halyard tail is accommodated within the system The snag is that in order to deliver the required elasticity and power, strong shock cord has to be fed around a series of blocks, and because it is prone to twist the system is liable to jam. We solved this by replacing the forward double block through which the shock cord passed by two small single cheek blocks, spaced a couple of inches apart.



Having developed an efficient system for getting the kite up, we turned our attention to improving the system for releasing the halyard and getting it down. As you come screaming into a crowded leeward mark, or gate, the last thing you want is the helm diving into the bottom of the boat groping to release the halyard out of the cam cleat. We have set things up so that the helm can release the halyard from either side of the boat by pulling a line which leads up through the deck to a T handle. The lines from each side join after passing through a small fairlead under the centre of main track beam, before splitting to two eyes through which the halyard passes. One eye is in front of the cam cleat and one behind. When either handle is pulled, the halyard is lifted out of the cam cleat and released. Light shock cord incorporated in the two lines, provides tension to ensure that the handles are kept flush to the deck when not in use.

When the halyard is released the tension provided by shock cord take away helps the crew recover and control the kite as it is lowered, and reduces any risk of it blowing out ahead or under the boat. Once fully stowed, the halyard is clipped under a small nylon hook to prevent the kite being pulled back out of the bag by the shock cord tension in the whole halyard system.

The system is brilliant!!

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