

Running

Light Winds - Ease the sail out to 90-100 degrees from the centreline. This should keep the boom out when you heel the boat to windward. Sailing by the lee, with wind streaming from the back to the front edge of the sail, is fast. Try to make some of the telltales fly to show the wind flow. It is essential to fit gybing lines that pull on the kicker boom so that the rig can be trimmed in and out.

Medium Winds - Boom out to 90 degrees (marks on the mast and deck will confirm the angle). Boat heeled to windward and surfing on the front of waves is fast. Speed is not increased by broad-reaching so point dead downwind or sail by the lee for the shortest distance between two points. Weight should be kept forward to trim the hulls level as, the longer the water line, the faster the speed that can be obtained.

Stronger Winds - Concentrate on surfing down the waves and keeping maximum speed. If the boat tries to bear away, pull 2 or 3 handfuls of sail in, which should counteract it. Sliding seats can be pushed back a little to keep the stern down and the rudder in the water but make sure the stern doesn't drag as it will slow the boat, which will make gybing more violent and put a strain on the rig. Sitting in a semi-lying position feels more secure in big waves.

Centreboard Control

The centreboard is quite large and has considerable drag when lowered. To avoid drifting sideways, the board should always be swung fully down when beating. On a reach, the board can be lifted as much as required, depending on the exact point of sailing and the weather. It is often possible to raise the board so that only the tip is down because the long narrow hulls give good directional stability on their own. When running, the board can always be lifted right up and the reduced friction makes a big difference to the speed.

Both centreboard and rudder should be frequently checked and should be smoothed and polished to reduce friction in the water. The centreboard should be a snug fit in its slot, with no sideways movement.

Steering

The system should be taut with no slop. Check the tightness of the tiller pivot by moving the arm up and down and tighten if necessary. The lines should be as tight as possible without any friction drag and it is important that the tiller and rudder are both in line fore-and-aft. The blade should have no sideways movement in the stock, which may need packing, but should pivot up and down easily using the control lines. The rudder blade vertical angle should be in line with the stock, raking back a little, so that the steering is light with plenty of feel.

Diana Campbell was the inspiration behind the concept that became the Challenger. Here, briefly, is her very remarkable story.

From the age of 7, Diana was confined to a wheelchair with rheumatoid arthritis and spent much time in hospital. Despite this, a home in Hamble with the Solent on the doorstep and boats all around made sailing an inevitable goal.

In the sixties Diana bought a Bobcat cruising catamaran. Her helpers would place her at the helm, in a modified typist's chair, and they would all go sailing. Later, the Bobcat was replaced by a larger Oceanic and, from this background, came the idea for a boat especially designed for people with disabilities, which was seaworthy enough for them to be safe but independent.

Rod McAlpine Downey, a noted designer of multihulls, including Crossbow, the World Speed Record holder at the time, produced some designs for a fast trimaran called the Challenger and the very first boat, sponsored by the Seamanship Foundation and BP, was built by Cheesman-Rollo & Co. and was delivered to Oxford Sailing Club in the summer of 1980.

Douglas Hurdall, who was then the Director of the Seamanship Foundation, was instrumental in helping raise funds to spread Challengers all over the UK and, by 1990, 110 boats had been produced.

After a brief spell being made by Dobsons of Shardlow, production was taken over by Reg White, a very experienced multihull builder and Olympic Gold Medal Tornado sailor who modernised the deck design and the controls to give us the MK2, the first boat, number 111, was called Pegasus, after the emblem of Reader's Digest magazine, who provided the funding to purchase it.

In 1993 production was switched to Anglo Marine, who lengthened the cockpit mould to give us the MK2a, starting with boat number 144. They also built the Aero-Rig and the MK3, with main and jib, neither being very popular. In 2002, Neville Towler the owner retired and Cair-Paravel became the new builder but, in 2005, the boat reverted to its MK2 spiritual home at the White Formula works in Brightlingsea, Essex.

Modern Challengers are cruised and raced successfully in mixed fleets by people with a range of disabilities. The controls compare well with any current racing dinghy and the rig responds to proper tuning. The boat is safe in all weathers and can still race when others are struggling - all the marks of a thoroughbred. **Welcome to the Challenger World!**