



## *Ask A Sailor*

### **Question: Can you tell me something about the SCYA?**

If you read this far, you already know that the Southern California Yachting Association has been around for a long time. They were organized in 1921 with the purpose of sharing ideas between clubs, advocating for boater-related issues, and promoting events. There are just shy of 90 yacht clubs in the SCYA, so that's a lot of events to coordinate (think Opening Days). Our own Staff Commodore Tamara Tatitch serves on the SCYA Board of Directors. For the racing community, one of the valuable services that the SCYA provides is to dole out unique race numbers for all the racing boats in Southern California. Boats that race more than casually are assigned a sail number that uniquely identifies their boat at any event up and down the coast. The next step is getting a rating for your boat (the subject of a future *Ask A Sailor* column). The SCYA member yacht clubs are further broken down into regional associations, and here in Dana Point we belong to the Association of Orange County Yacht Clubs. Both of these organizations maintain and coordinate event calendars to try to avoid multiple major events taking place on the same day. You can learn more about these organizations online here <https://scya.org/> and here <https://aocyc.org/>. Or ask Tamara about them when you see her at the club!

### **Question: What are the different kinds of sailboat races?**

Short answer, there are a lot. Generally races are often thought of in two categories; point-to-point distance races, and shorter races that go around buoys. Distance races include a huge range, from around the world or across the Pacific, to down the coast of Southern California. Distance races often include all different kinds sailboats. Buoy races are of a couple types. A "windward/leeward" race goes straight upwind to a mark, and then straight downwind to a second mark. The America's Cup is one of these, as is most college and Olympic sailboat racing. The boats usually use spinnakers for the downwind legs, and often do several laps. Sometimes the boats are all the same type, but in our local races all types of sailboats race against each other. A "random leg" race as the name implies, goes in any old direction to the wind, but often it's sort of a triangle in terms of the wind direction. Some of the course is upwind, some downwind, and sometimes the wind is coming from your side. Virtually all of the races that DWYC will put on this year are random leg races, where all types of sailboats are welcome.

**Question: Why are the racing rules so complicated?**

My cynical side says it's because there are so many lawyers involved in the sport of sailing. But in reality, that's not why things are complicated. It has to do with the fact that racing presents such a huge variety of situations, oftentimes where boats are relatively close together. Then factor in all sorts of courses, weather conditions, and strategy, and suddenly things can get complicated. The good news is that just like powerboating, there are just a few basic rules, for example don't hit another boat, and port and starboard right-of-way. Complicated rules do discourage newcomers to the sport, and US Sailing has considered putting together a simplified ruleset for beginners. For now, however, there is no such thing. Instead, people who race have to put in some time to learn the rules. It's always to a racer's advantage to know the rules. You can use them to your tactical advantage, and often avoid getting into dicey situations altogether. There are several good online courses available, and of course the rulebook itself. Some people learn better by being in an actual racing situation, and then learning the rulebook answer after the fact. Maybe this is by talking to other racers, reading up about that particular situation, or watching some videos. There's always more to learn!

**Question: What's the story with all the sailboats out on Thursday afternoons?**

Since 1988 or so, sailors have been gathering on Thursday afternoons in Dana Point Harbor for an informal race. The event is called the Pharkles (sometimes spelled Farkles) and the group were originally known as the Old Pharkle Sailing Club. Racers follow the rules using the honor system. There is no race committee, no signups, no trophies. Some boats are more competitive than others, but it's fair to say that everyone out there is mostly there for the joy of being out sailing on what is usually a beautiful day. Having said that, the group races all year round, the weather be what it may. The format of a Pharkle race is simple; if you won last week's race, you get to call the course for this week's race. Racers listen on VHF CH 68 for the course, and the first boat starts at around 2pm. The boats are of all shapes and sizes, so the start times are offset in order to make an even playing field. In a nutshell, the slowest boats start first, and the fastest boats start last, so ideally all boats finish at about the same time. DWYC is well-represented in the Pharkle races. You'll often see many sailors gather on the DWYC patio on Thursdays after the race to hash over the day's race and maybe get some ideas of how to do better next week. All sailors are welcome and encouraged to join in the Pharkle races. This is hands down the best environment to learn about sailboat racing. If you have any questions about the Pharkles please reach out to me at [race@dwyc.org](mailto:race@dwyc.org).

**Question: What's the significance of the various buoys in the waters near Dana Point?**

There are four sets of buoys in the waters near Dana Point Harbor. Each of them is maintained by a different entity. The big heavy marks that you really don't want to run into are maintained by the US Coast Guard. Other buoys are owned and maintained by the South Orange County Wastewater Authority, the local Yacht Clubs, and Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Today's answer will just cover the USCG buoys. There are currently three local UCCG buoys. These buoys show up on all the charts and chartplotters, as they've been around for a long time. The buoys have official names that you see on the charts, and local names that people often use to refer to them. The red buoy off of the Headlands is colloquially known as "Whistle buoy" but on the charts it's called "2sjr". This buoy is to mark the dangerously shallow waters between it and the Headlands, in the rocky area known as the San Juan Rocks. It has a red light that flashes every 2.5 seconds, and a fog horn that sounds whenever there's enough wave action to make it work. So "2sjr" stands for 2 seconds san juan red. Next, there are a pair of buoys that mark the entrance to Dana Point Harbor, one green and one red. Skippers entering the harbor use the mnemonic "red right returning" and keep the red buoy on their starboard side. Both of these buoys are also lighted to help with night navigation. The buoy locally known as "Green" is noted on the charts as "G FL 2.5s". You get the idea; this buoy flashes green every 2.5 seconds. It's red partner is locally known as "Red Nunn" having to do with the generic name for that shape of buoy. On the charts it's called "R FL 2.5s" and it flashes red every 2.5 seconds. There are more land-based markers as you come up the channel. The green marker on the very end of the jetty to port has a light and a loud foghorn built into it. The foghorn is useful in heavy fog, and mariners can actually turn it on remotely. This is done by tuning to VHF 81, and hitting the mic button five times. This pair of land-based markers also have very bright flashing lights, but they flash on a 5-second interval. An astute mariner will know from quite far away (5 nm) that if they see the 5-second flashing light, they're looking at land. The USCG currently publishes a Notice to Mariners on a weekly basis. In that notice, they give brief updates of any buoy issues or failures. For example, right now there are some buoys with light issues at Catalina near the Isthmus and West End. If you're interested, you can find the notices for our district [online here](#).

**Question: Getting back to the buoys near Dana Point, what are the "candy striped" buoys for?**

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In a previous "Ask" we talked about the buoys that are maintained by the USCG and you see on all the charts and chartplotters. But there are other buoys in the Dana Point area, and they're not on the charts! They have no lights and make no sounds, so it's good for local boaters to have some idea of where they are. One set of local unmarked buoys are the two candy striped ones about two miles offshore from the harbor entrance. These buoys are maintained by the South Orange County Wastewater Authority. Our two local candy striped

buoys mark a sewer outfall pipe that runs from the water treatment plant in Dana Point. The sailors refer to these marks as “Sewer East” and “Sewer West”. Treated wastewater comes out here, and the whole process is monitored by the SOCWA. [Link is below](#). As you can imagine, there are other sewer discharge pipes going into the ocean in other locations. There used to be a third candy striped buoy located off of Aliso Creek, which the sailors called “L Mark”. This buoy was barely above water for quite awhile, and not visible at all for the last year or more. I contacted the SOCWA to see if it was a hazard to navigation (could a keel snag on it?). They assured me that the mark is gone and/or below a depth that a boat could snag it. So sailors, we can no longer have a sailboat race that goes to L and back!

### **Question: What is a Rhumb Line?**

I’ve never looked up the official definition, but here it is: a rhumb line is an arc crossing all meridians of longitude at the same angle. That is to say, it’s a path with a constant bearing, or heading. For example, in last Saturday’s race the boats started near the Balboa Pier and had to take our red Whistle buoy to port. The bearing between the start and the Whistle buoy is the rhumb line path, with a heading of about 133 degrees true. For the boats joining in the June 6 Cruise the Coast for Charity Rally, the start is just south of the Newport entrance buoy, and boats take Whistle buoy to port. That gives a rhumb line of 137 degrees true.

### **Question: What Was the N2E Race Like “Back in the Day?”**

For this answer, I had to go to Helen Hawkins, source of all club knowledge. DWYC had a reputation for many years of hosting a big party in Ensenada on race weekend. With typically 8-10 DWYC member boats in the race, carloads of friends, family, and spectators would head down to Ensenada. Some of the racers were Jerry Wexler, Tom Reagan, Robinson, and Huxler (sorry I don’t have better info on names). The “support team” would bring lots of food with them, and Helen’s pockets were full of cash from recent raffles (of course), t-shirt sales, and a big Sunday brunch the weekend before. Once across the border, the caravan would usually stop off in Porto Nuevo for lunch and to stock up on rum, vodka, tequila, and beer. Then it was on to Ensenada. While cruise ships have been going to Ensenada for a long time, the business was not nearly as big as it is today. Ensenada in 1980 was a relatively small port city. All the action was in downtown Ensenada, and boats simply anchored in the bay after they finished the race. The race headquarters was the Bahia Hotel, and the partying took place on the lawns and open spaces in and around the hotels. The DWYC club headquarters was Villa Marina for a while, but when armed guards started to show up, Phil Eaton (race chair or commodore at the time) arranged to get the club set up at Villa Fontana instead. Thus began a stretch of 5-10 years in the mid 80’s with huge DWYC parties at the Villa Fontana. Helen would get a room for racers to shower, and

another room to keep all the food and beverages. Other yacht clubs with large contingents of people did similar things, each essentially taking over a hotel for the weekend. All racers were welcome at the DWYC party, and it was known far and wide as one of THE places to be on race weekend. On Monday morning, Helen would load up the returning boats with food and booze still left from the weekend, and the caravan and boats all headed back home.

Here we are in 2025, with a changed Ensenada and a changed sailboat racing community to name just two. Now we can even track the race boats in real time from our computers. Old timers will tell you it's nothing like it used to be, but it is what it is. The biggest turnout was in 1983, with 675 boats registered. This year there are about 120 boats racing to Ensenada, including our own Jerry Wexler, Barry Clark, and Viggo Torbensen. Best of luck guys!

### **Question: How Did Viggo Get to Ensenada So Fast?**

I had the same question, so I asked Viggo what his secret to success was. His short answer, "this year's N2E race was no different than most others, you try to prepare for every possible scenario and you still find yourself searching for answers toward the end of the race." What he means is that the wind often shifts and dies before dawn, and this year did not disappoint. Up until that point, Viggo ran almost a perfect rhumb-line course. The wind was somewhat behind the beam and they were able to fly their A2 spinnaker since mid-afternoon. They were setting up to go outside the Coronado Islands for slightly more breeze, but as they got closer their game plan changed to going inside (most of these boats have real time weather modeling tools onboard and I suspect Viggo does too). They ended up pretty close to the cursed tuna pens near the inside island, and had to briefly gybe toward the coast to avoid going "tuna fishing." Once they got back on course, it was a straight shot to the finish going 7-8 knots. That is, until the pre-dawn wind went to pot with about 20 miles to go. Soon the dying breeze was on their nose, and they had to tack their way in to the finish line, beating the 2<sup>nd</sup> place PHRF-A boat by 37 minutes corrected time. Great race Viggo!

### **Question : What is Beer Can Racing All About?**

Beer can racing is all about fun with friends and watching the sunset. In Dana Point, these these informal races began back in the days of the Capo Bay Yacht Club, probably in the mid 90's or so. No description of beer can racing is complete without an ode to Rob Moore, the now-deceased racing editor for *Latitude 38*, who penned the **Ten Commandments of Beer Can Racing**. The short version is below, but for the full text please [see this page](#).

1. Thou shalt not take anything other than safety too seriously.
2. Thou shalt honor the racing rules if thou knowest them.

3. Thou shalt not run out of beer.
4. Thou shalt not covet thy competitor's boat, sails, equipment, crew, or PHRF rating.
5. Thou shalt not amp out.
6. Thou shalt not protest thy neighbor.
7. Thou shalt not mess up thy boat.
8. Thou shalt always go to the yacht club afterwards.
9. Thou shalt bring thy spouse, kids, friends, and whoever else wants to go.
10. Thou shalt not worry; thou shalt be happy.

**Question: Have you got any fun facts about Transpac?**

The TransPacific sailboat race has been run every other year since about 1939. There's a much newer TransAtlantic race run every other year as well. From the Transpac website, "except for the first few hours, the race is largely off-the-wind and is, therefore, most favorable to lightweight, planing-type hulls that will sail far above their theoretical hull speed". And this, "bursts of sustained boat speeds well over 20 knots are not unusual". The racers will attempt to get into the southern end of the large Pacific high-pressure system for optimal speed. Perhaps needless to say, but real-time weather modeling is critical. The current record for the race is 5 d, 1hr, 55:26 set by a 100-foot supermaxi called *Camanche* in 2017. The multihull boats are faster, with the best time about 1d 4hrs faster. This was set by a trimaran called *Mighty Merloe* also in 2017. Lastly, Transpac boats have been actively involved with the Ocean Cleanup Project for over a decade, and have been a big part of helping to map the extent of the North Pacific Gyre.

**Question: How can I follow the Tranpac racers?**

The main tracking tool is an almost real-time system available from a desktop and from an app on your phone. From a desktop, go to <https://transpacyc.com/race-info/2025-race-info> and click on Pasha Race Tracker. From your phone, install the YB Races app, click on Add Races and search for Transpac 2025. Add that race to your profile, then click on it. In addition to the Yellow Brick transponder, most of the race boats also have location systems that allow them to broadcast their position via AIS. There are a number of free apps available to monitor marine traffic via AIS. Racers might not be broadcasting their position, so you probably won't see all the boats this way. You can also keep an eye on Facebook. Both the club page, and the Blackwing Racing page will show information from time to time. Finally, stop by the club! We hope to have the Yellow Brick tracking displaying on one of the TV's.

**Question: Barnacles are growing like mad on the bottom of my boat this time of year. Should I care? Or put another way, what's the bottom line below the water line?**

Boat racing is just like any other speed sport; friction is king. Bike racers and skiers shave the hair off their arms and legs, and get in a tuck position. Cars are shaped like teardrops. Birds and airplanes are cigar-shaped with long pointed wings. All to combat the forces of friction! Sailboats (and powerboats too) are no different, but in the case of boating, the big battle is below the water line, where the hull meets the water. For sailboat racers, hydrodynamic drag translates directly to slower boat speeds. Reports vary as to the exact speed difference, but there's no question that a boat with barnacles will be multiple kts (nm/hr) slower than an identical boat with a clean hull. For serious racers, keeping the bottom of the boat clean and smooth is a high priority. The bottom is stripped and repainted frequently, and it gets cleaned a day or two before every big race. For powerboaters, water friction translates directly to poorer fuel efficiency. Again, reports vary, but fuel consumption can increase by as much as 40% for a barnacle-bottomed boat versus a clean boat. A dirty boat bottom can really contribute to your boat's fuel bill. Check back again next week for Part 2 of the Bottom Line Below the Water Line!

**Question: Below the Water Line Part 2: What's the Bottom Cleaner's Perspective?**

For this, I spoke to Ed Riener, of Ed Riener Diving Co. Ed has been cleaning boat bottoms in the harbor since 1978, so you could say he's seen a lot of bottoms. I learned a lot talking with Ed, but I'll focus here on a couple things; what grows on boat bottoms, and how do you get that stuff off? First, Dana Point doesn't really have true barnacles, but rather tube worms. Tube worms, aka "Japanese Coral" is an invasive species, believed to have been introduced to North American shores from Navy ships during WWII. These are white crusty spaghetti-like growths that usually start growing in May and end in November. In the warm water months, tube worms can foul untreated surfaces in just a couple weeks. The other thing that grows on boats, mostly near the water line, is sea grass. This grows quickly in the warm water months too, but it wipes off pretty easily. Having chiseled a lot of tube worms off the bottom of my plastic kayak, I was curious how Ed removes them from a boat hull. Boats that get cleaned regularly and have new-ish anti-fouling bottom paint (1 year old) are easier to tackle, and the bottoms can be cleaned with an old piece of carpet or a woolen mitt. As the bottom paint ages, or it's been a long time since the last cleaning, more aggressive scrubbers and a lot more elbow grease have to be used to remove tube worms. They use tools similar to floor scrubbers, that have different levels of gritty pads as needed. Finally metal scrapers are used for the really crusty parts. Not too surprisingly, bad rotator cuffs and hyper-extended elbows are not uncommon in the bottom cleaning world. Fun Fact #1: Ed once found a guy's Rolex watch that went overboard in the middle of the

channel, and the gentleman invited Ed to his retirement party 30 years later.

Fun Fact #2: Ed plays acoustic guitar and sings in a local band called Swingshift.

### **Question: Below the Water Line Part 3: Modern Bottom Paints**

There are three broad categories of bottom paints available to recreational boaters. These are ablative paints, hard paints, and hybrids of the two. All three types typically contain “biocides” which are ingredients that kill microscopic organisms and the larvae of tube worms. Biocides often contain some form of copper, but there are also products that use zinc and other things. An ablative paint is designed to slowly wear off as the boat moves through the water, so as a new layer of paint is exposed to the water, fresh biocides are there too. For boats that are used a lot, but not too worried about fuel efficiency or speed, an ablative paint can be the way to go. Since ablative paints are intended to slowly wear off, the hull bottom will never be as smooth as that of a hard or hybrid paint. Hard paints are good for boat owners that want to focus on a super smooth bottom to reduce friction, or drag, through the water. Hard paints are also good for boats that are stored in drydock, and for commercial boats, due to their durability. Hybrid paints offer the best of both worlds. They contain slickening agents and biocides. These high-end paints can cost as much as \$400 per gallon, so shop the sales! In spite of the cost, these paints can really pay off for powerboaters concerned with fuel efficiency, and sailboaters concerned with speed. With regular bottom cleaning (no harsh scrubbing), these products can provide a glassy-smooth bottom for two years or more. One product growing in popularity, PropSpeed, is a coating applied to moving metal parts like props, shafts, and rudders. It’s completely free of biocides, so is not toxic. The product consists of series of coatings that bond well to metal, topped by a super slick silicone layer.

### **Question: Hey Sailor, How Lucky Are We?**

As Labor Day approaches, boaters all over the country are looking forward to some time on the water. For some of us, it’s a race down the coast. For others, it’s heading to Catalina or a nearby port for some fun with friends. Or maybe it’s just hanging out in the harbor bbq’ing or paddling or taking a stroll. Have a great Labor Day weekend, whatever floats your boat!

### **Question: There are so many experienced sailors and boaters in the club, how can I learn from them, or maybe just hear some of what they have to say about their adventures?**

You’re in luck! We’ll be starting up a new **Talk Series in late September**, focusing on just that topic! Following on the very successful Transpac presentations in August, the club is

starting a presentation series called **Sea Tales**. Our inaugural Sea Tales speaker will be Jerry Wetzler, on Tuesday September 30. Stay tuned for more details.

**Question: Earlier this year you talked about the navigational buoys near the harbor, as well as the candy-striped ones. What about the yellow buoys out there? Who owns them, and what are they for?**

There are four yellow spar buoys near Dana Point Harbor that are maintained by the local yacht clubs. These buoys are primarily used for local sailboat racing, and the maintenance costs are shared by DPYC, DWYC, and Aventura. They have simple names; A, B, C, and D. You might wonder why they're located where they are. Who knows? What I can say is that our sailboat race courses are often designed to include legs that challenge racers at three primary angles to the wind; upwind, downwind, and in between, or reaching. The locations of A,B,C, and D, along with the other navigational buoys out there, provides the three clubs' race programs with lots of options to design courses that include the primary angles to the wind, no matter what the conditions. Below is a map of all our local buoys. This map, with buoy coordinates, headings between marks, and course options is available on the club's website [here](#).

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