

self-service

HOW TO...



PART 5

BOOM TWEAKS

This month our resident maestro of maintenance, Marjan Tkavc, turns his attention to that most essential but occasionally irksome piece of equipment, the humble boom...

Windsurfing is very much a specialised sport, and so is all the equipment associated with it. There's not much that the average windsurfer can do about it, besides making wise buying decisions, fine tuning, maintenance, etc, but there's always the exception to the rule. There are little things that can be modified, as we've been showing through these series of DIY articles. Another example is the boom.

Windsurfing buying decisions are usually based upon dimensions, price, brand reputation, reviews, materials, etc. These parameters can more or less all be checked before buying. But how the equipment feels in your hands, under your feet, how difficult it is to set it up, and so on, is another story. These issues usually only come to light when you get the kit out on the water, and sometimes we're quite happy with it, sometimes less so – and sometimes we put it up for sale!

The humble boom is a prime example. It's quite personal in a way, simply because it's in our hands all the time we're on the water. So buying decisions, besides the usual, should be based upon: 1 – grip / diameter, and even more, the foam quality, which determines the extent of calluses and blood on your hands, and: 2 – ease of setting it up, how easy it is to extend it, can you do it with one hand while in the water, what is the boom clamp's direction, whether there is a loop-loop-go outhaul, etc.

BOOM DOOM 1 – CLAMP DIRECTION

The importance of the boom clamp's direction isn't at all obvious until you rig for the first time. Most mast extensions have downhaul cleats positioned so that the sail's clew is on the left side when the sail is in front of you on the ground while downhauling it. So, when attaching the boom it's best that the clamp comes up to the mast. That way the clamp isn't hidden and doesn't get stuck between the mast and luff of the sail, making it easier to fix the clamp's rope in position and close it.

However, some modern booms now have the clamp turned upside-down, which is annoying. Such booms are quite difficult to attach, especially if you're putting them on after applying full downhaul. The solution is simple – just turn the boom around!



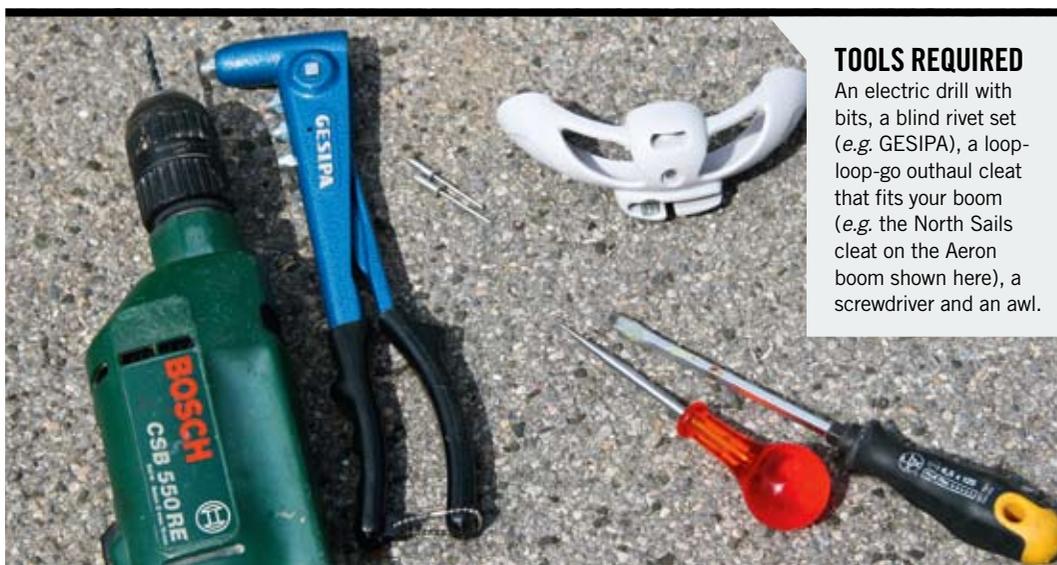
❶ If your boom has a clamp that closes under the mast, which makes it difficult to rig, just turn the boom around!

❷ Of course, you'll need to reverse the harness lines and uphaul too.

BOOM DOOM 2 – THE OUTHAUL CLEAT

Most booms in the lower size scale come with a loop-loop-go outhaul cleat, which is great because it works a treat. The problem is that bigger booms often have cleats ready for the adjustable outhaul systems on race sails. Of course this is great as well, but not for us freeriders who use bigger sails (say, 7.3m) just for blasting and have no need of an adjustable system.

But not to worry, it's quite easy to change the outhaul cleat on an aluminium boom. You just need to get an appropriate spare loop-loop-go cleat, drill a hole and finish off with a squeeze of your fist to fasten it with a blind rivet.



TOOLS REQUIRED

An electric drill with bits, a blind rivet set (e.g. GESIPA), a loop-loop-go outhaul cleat that fits your boom (e.g. the North Sails cleat on the Aeron boom shown here), a screwdriver and an awl.



❶ Remove the old cleat by drilling through the blind rivets. If they start to spin, show them no mercy – use a screwdriver or awl to remove them.



❷ Carefully position the new cleat, make a mark for the hole with an awl, and drill an appropriately sized hole to suit the blind rivets that you're using.



❸ Fasten the cleat using a blind rivet. If this is new to you, just go to your local DIY shop, buy a starter set, ask the shop assistant how it's done and do a few trial runs before trying it on your boom. It really is easy and a lot more straightforward than you might fear.



THE AUTHOR

Marjan Tkavc hails from Slovenia, where people ski the Alps in the morning and windsurf the Adriatic in the afternoon. He started windsurfing 15 years ago after his wife (a former racer) thoughtfully taught him on a sinker. Marjan caught the DIY bug at just 14, and found himself taking on increasingly ambitious projects, but insists that there is no connection to his professional life as a nuclear expert. His DIY credo is: "Simple solutions can solve big problems and everyone can do it". In his spare time he runs mtbslovenia.net, just in case you find yourself in Slovenia on a no wind day...