

## RIGGING A SPINNAKER

Rick Lucas: *Ping*

I'll admit it. I've been bitten by the racing bug... bad. Since late summer 2003, I've been in the pit on a Catalina 36 for just about every local race. Can race, sprint race, long-distance race... it didn't matter. I wanted to be out there. I always enjoy flying the asymmetrical spinnaker with my favorite experience being a race back from Catalina. The owner promoted me to skipper as he couldn't make the race. Once the wind clocked around to the beam, we hoisted the asym and sailed through our fleet to take the gun at the finish. That was a rush.

I wanted to campaign Ping with a spinnaker in this year's Newport - Ensenada race. We'd go faster and it would be fun. The only problem was that Ping came without a spinnaker or any of the gear required to fly one except for a spinnaker halyard and even that had to be replaced because it was too big for the block at the masthead. Clearly, this was going to involve many boat units.



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A new spinnaker was not in the budget so I turned to a local marine salvage shop that maintains a large used sail inventory. I wanted an asymmetrical spinnaker because I was not going to install a pole. I didn't want that complexity for the race. I guess it was meant to be because the shop had a nearly new asym cruising chute that was virtually a perfect fit. I bought it and took it to the boat, hoisted at the slip tacked to the bow roller and it looked great. The guy who had it made even had a bird on it. Unfortunately it looks a lot more like an oriole than a duck.

The next step required rigging the lines and tackle necessary to make it all work. I decided that I'd clone the adjustable tack

system used on the Catalina. This involved mounting a block with a becket on the bow roller. The tack line would attach to the becket, run through a block attached to the tack of the spinnaker and back through the first block. From there the line would run through blocks mounted on the lifeline stanchions to a cam cleat mounted outside the cockpit coaming. It would then run through a ratcheting turning block farther aft in line with the cam cleat and turn forward to a jamming cleat on the beveled edge of the coaming. This would permit the use of the winch to haul in the tack if necessary.



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Ping came with only primary winches, and since I didn't want to add two additional winches to cost I figured that I could use the primaries for the spinnaker, using the winches mounted to the house roof during the spin set and douse.

The final issue was the configuring the spinnaker sheet blocks. Ping came with a sliding block track on the toe rail,



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but it stopped about four feet ahead of the transom. Conventional wisdom holds that you want the spinnaker sheet blocks as far aft as possible to open the spinnaker to the wind as much as possible. The solution was to mount a pair of Lewmar foot blocks on top of the coaming as far aft as possible. I mounted them flat to the surface. I actually think I'm going to want to raise the inboard side of the blocks to smooth the flow of the sheet through it, but this is what I have for now.

On paper, the installation looks like it will work. The real test will be when we fly the spinnaker for the first time. I was planning on doing it this weekend, but rain's in the forecast. It looks like the first test will be "in anger" in our race on 28th February.

**UPDATE:** I have flown the spinnaker about six times now and almost everything works perfectly. What works perfectly:

- The tack system and locations
- The new halyard
- The crew (I had to mention their excellent sail handling)

What doesn't work well:

- Not having secondary winches for the spinnaker sheets

Truly, the right way to do this is by adding secondary winches, but there is probably a way to do this without them. Possibly using cam or jam cleats. I'm still noodling this out and will report back.

***Things I'd do differently:*** See above.

Costs: Spinnaker - US\$755.00

Misc. blocks & shackles - US\$277.00

Cleats - US\$37.00

Lines - US\$139.00

Time: About 4 hours

**NOTE:** This project would have cost more but for two things. I timed a cordage sale at SailNet perfectly. I think I saved a nickel or so a foot. That adds up to real money on almost 300 feet of line. Second, I scoured the local marine salvage shop for parts before I bought new. I probably saved \$50 on the ratchet block and the two blocks on the bow. I actually bought two nearly new standing blocks for the spin sheets there, but decided against using them.