

WINNING TEAM COMBINATIONS IN 3x3 TEAM RACING.

In 3X3 Team Racing (“TR”), it is important to be familiar with winning and losing combinations.

Team Racing at RPYC is normally sailed in a 2X2 format – 2 teams each of 2 boats sailing against each other – and the 2-boat team that includes the boat that finishes last (4th) loses.

It is fast-moving, exciting, simple, interesting, strategic, and cut-throat – and after 15 minutes of tight racing on a short windward leeward course – if one of your team boats finishes 4th by a centimetre - your team loses.

3X3 boat TR is just as exciting but is more strategic because there are more possible winning and losing combinations and one of the 3 boat teams can win with one of their team boats in (6th) last.

In 3X3 TR, the 3-boat team with the lowest total finishing placings score for the race – wins and the team with the highest total finishing placings score loses.

Each 3-boat team’s score in a race - is the total of their 3 boats finishing positions with 1st counted as 1, 2nd as 2 etc). Any 3-boat team’s placings that adds up to less than the other 3-boat team scored in that race wins – to win one needs to get less than half of the available finishing scores in a six-boat race.

If one adds the placings of 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 the total is 21 – so if the total of your 3-boat teams finishing placings score is ten or less - you must have a better score than your opponents – unless there is a dead-heat somewhere in the finishing placings.

If the teams cannot be separated because of a dead-heat or because the RO cannot separate two or more boats - then the race should be resailed. I have never seen that happen, but it is feasible.

A fundamental principle in 3X3 TR is not to give up first place – at least until you absolutely have to do so. A rule of thumb is that if your team has first but not last place, your team is winning – in fact any time you are winning 2 of the 3 pairs of

boats – your team is winning. Some people find that way of working out who is winning easier.

It is considered best practice in TR to try to establish a stable winning combination in a race and stable winning combinations are said to include:

1 + 2 + anything which mathematically must be 9 or less - a winning combination when the total placings is 21 - for simplicity on the water called "Play 1" and 2 + 3 + 4 is 9 - a winning combination – for simplicity on the water called "Play 2" and 1 + 4 + 5 is 10 - a winning combination - for simplicity on the water is called "Play 4".

If you watch US team racing on "youtube" – you may hear the crews shouting plays to each other – it is common to hear them call "Play 1" meaning that either have or are working to establish a 1-2 position and similarly you might call other play numbers to each other.

These combinations are called "stable" because they are relatively easy to defend, though in team racing nothing is guaranteed until of your team boats are all safely across the finish line - having started properly and sailed the course and finished without any outstanding penalties.

Play 1 is the most stable because it is difficult for opponents to catch any team with first and second in a short team racing course that takes between 12 and 15 minutes routinely. 1-2 at mark 1 is not over – but it's a great start. Modern TR courses mostly finish downwind which gives the following boats a chance particularly when rule 17 is off - so a boat clear astern may establish an overlap on a boat previously clear ahead and then luff the boat in front.

It is normally the role of the third boat on a team in a Play 1 to stay clean and slow the last 3 boats a little, to make it as easy as possible for their mates in front – and if they lose third they must do everything they can to remain close - so that if the opponent that passes them gets up to their teammates in 2nd - they can support their teammate and perhaps perform a passback to re-establish 1-2-3.

Play 2 is stable because your team's three boats can reasonably simply cover the opponent's two boats behind, and also push the leader along to the finish line and it

is difficult for the opponent in first to attack all three of your team's boats behind - without losing the lead when doing so.

Play 4 is more complex, but the best approach is for the first placed boat to not give up first for as long as possible whilst for the fourth and fifth place boats seeking to hold the last placed opponent in last.

There are two unstable winning combinations:

1 + 3 + anything

2 + 3 + 5

These combinations are unstable because they offer simple opportunities to the opponents in 4th and 6th to perform a pass-back on your 5th boat and pull their 6th boat up into 4th or 5th place whereupon they will be leading and then to have their 4 and 5 to work together on 3.

The key to converting a losing combination into a winning one is the ability to quickly recognize and act on these opportunities. So, if you find yourself in a 2-4-5 or a 2-4-6, you need to realize that the opponent has a 1-3, and you must prevent your opponent from securing a 1-2.

In such case your boat in second place must slow the opponent in third enough to let a teammate pass through – perform a pass-back – your 2nd place boat allows his teammate to pass him whilst holding the opponent previously in 3rd place back into 4th place.

If you find yourself with a 1-3, and your first placed boat can slow the opponent in second enough to let the third placed boat pass through into first whilst holding 2nd, then you have a 1-2, and you can simply sail to the finish while putting a loose cover on your opponents. In the same way,

if you have a 2-3-5, and your team can slow your opponent in fourth to let fifth place move ahead, then you have a 2-3-4, Play 2.

If you find yourself in an unstable winning combination, try to convert to a stable combination.

In a stable winning combination, move the race forward as quickly as possible and get to the finish line as soon as you can.

Positive strategies in these situations include herding opponents to laylines and avoiding tacking duels.

If you find yourself In a losing combination, it is important to slow the race down: avoid lay-lines and try to create situations where your opponent might make a tactical or boat-handling mistake.

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