

# Tuning Your Tanzer for Heavy Air

By Jim Chastain (T-420)

To obtain maximum enjoyment from your Tanzer 16, and to feel comfortable in the knowledge that you are sailing optimally, under any given weather condition or point of sailing, it is important that you become familiar with how to tune your Tanzer.

With April come the fresh winds of Spring, and it is vitally important to your peace of mind and personal safety that you know how to rig and tune for heavy air. While still on shore, or immediately at launching, prepare your boat for the existing conditions. Once underway the exertion required to deal with the wind and waves will prevent you from making the necessary adjustments.



When stepping the mast, make sure that the mast is placed all the way forward in the deck slot. This will ensure that the sails can be flattened and close up the slot between the main and jib for reduced lift. Don't over tighten the shrouds and forestay; this will allow the mast to flop a little to leeward from one tack to the other, making it easier to keep the boat flat. You can use mast bend to flatten the mainsail. Rig the downhaul (or Cunningham) and the boomvang on the main for tightening (and flattening) the sail. Move your jib block cars all the way back aft from their normal position in the tracks. This will help flatten the bottom of the sail and spill off air from the top of the jib. Put a triple purchase on your mainsheet blocks at the traveler to help with the increased forces that will be transmitted to your arm through the mainsheet as you may have to constantly play the main. Make sure the hiking straps are properly adjusted to permit maximum extension of you and your crew over the side or the boat for hiking out and balancing the heeling moment. When you raise your sails before heading out, make sure that the halyards are as tight as you can get them and secured properly, so they won't come loose. Now you're ready to go out!

The objective for heavy air sailing is to **KEEP YOUR BOAT FLAT AND BALANCED** at all times with as much power in the sails as is practicable. Start your heavy air experience being conservative; as you improve your technique you can opt for more power in the sails. Flatten out your mainsail by tightening the downhaul (or Cunningham), the outhaul and the boomvang. Go ahead and put a little mast and boom bend in it to get the main as flat as possible. 8-12 inches of mast bend is about right. This depowers the sail- you can always put more draft back into it if necessary later on, and its a lot easier than trying to tighten up while underway. Pull the jib in as tight as possible on a beat and cleat it there. Play the main constantly to balance the varying hearing moment on the boat- **NEVER CLEAT THE MAIN IN HEAVY AIR!** The results can be disastrous! Luff the main all the way and hike out before you even think of luffing the jib. The jib will power the boat through



the chop and keep the boat moving forward. If you have a traveler that will permit casing the boom considerably, off the centerline of the boat, do so and flatten your sail with the mainsheet. Look upwind and keep alert to puffs and sudden windshifts. Be ready to move your weight about the boat agilely to compensate for the rapid change in heeling moment.

When sailing off the wind, overtrim the main so as to stall it out a little. This is good insurance against a spinout to weather and consequent spill (AKA "Death Roll"-- Ed.). Also, pull the centerboard up at least halfway to allow

the boat to slide to leeward and avoid "tripping" on too much board. Weather helm will reduce and speed will increase enough so that extra lift will make up for the loss of board area.

Be conservative until you've developed your technique for heavy air sailing and have the confidence to challenge the elements. Then go for it! Above all, don't let the preceding advice on tuning scare you out of getting out in your Tanzer in the wild stuff. The precautions are advisable but there are only a few thrills in life that can top riding a planing Tanzer 16 across the waves with your hair flying straight back and not a dry stitch of clothing on you-- just like hanging on to a wildcat's tail in a hurricane! Go, get out there, and try it! Watch the more experienced skipper if you're new, or better yet, crew for him. Once you master the boat you'll find there's no better way to sail than in heavy air.