

RS 800 BOAT CHECK

Keep your boat in tip top condition both on and off the water and you will reduce breakages and therefore maximise your sailing time

Neil Ashby provides some basic tips on how to keep your **RS800 in top tip condition. It highlights some common errors sailors make that put their boats at risk and suggests some general maintenance ideas that will help preserve the life of your boat.**

Top Five Check List

1. Make sure you let the Cunningham off completely and the Kicker off a bit in between races in windy weather – your mast will thank you
2. If you have a big pitch pole, check your mast thoroughly for any signs of stress – it might prevent a full break later in the championship/season
3. Put plenty of padding on your trailer to help protect your hull
4. Patch up any scratches on the wing bars with paint to prevent erosion
5. Check your boat over regularly – look for worn ropes, loose or worn shackles, worn cleats, signs of rubbing on the hull, scuffed wing bars etc and replace or repair immediately

MORE DETAIL...

WHEN AFLOAT - In the windy stuff

- **Mast**

When we are all racing around in 25knots plus we constantly put on more and more cunningham and kicker to flatten our sails off by bending the mast.

This is good, but it was noticeable at the 2005 nationals that a lot of people broke their masts due to not letting the cunningham off in-between the races and letting the sails flog. This puts tremendous pressure on the lower part of the mast causing them to snap!

It is also a good idea when in extreme conditions to keep the main on the centre line down wind to give the mast a little support. But again with the cunningham off and some kicker on to keep the boom down.

If you have a major pitch pole and get the boat back up the right way have a look round your mast for a moment, it maybe pointing the right way but that doesn't mean it came away unharmed. Check for little tiny cracks at the base of the mast and any compacting of the mast. It is far easier and cheaper to repair a mast at this stage than when it is in 2 or 3 pieces.

- **Daggerboard**

It is a good idea to raise your board during windy stuff to reduce the risk of them snapping off when you bear off at the top mark.

Raise it 8 inches or so and you will reduce the risk of breakage significantly.

And of course you have already let the kicker off haven't you to protect your mast!



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OFF THE WATER

THE MAST

The mast is very strong when it is kept up to date and everything is working well on it. However, there are a number of areas that require attention to stop us breaking them and to keep our insurance premiums down!

- **UV Sunlight:**

The first and obvious one is the fading of the mast from a shiny black to a horrible greyish looking rather tired pole. The fading is down to UV sunlight penetrating the fibres and causing them to weaken. At the 2005 nationals a lot of older masts did break with this being a definite contributing factor. So simply varnish the mast to stop it weakening and you can finish windy races!

- **Mast fittings:**

A lot of people aren't paying enough attention to washing their masts down at the end of an event causing the build up of salt electrolysis between the carbon and the aluminium fittings on the mast.

With-in a very short period of time the salt wins and weakens the rivets around the fixings causing them to break or fall off.

The main areas that get affected are the cleats for the main and jib halyard.

It is easy to rectify:

- a) Take the fitting off and either put a piece of plastic between the mast and the fitting
OR
- b) just clean it up using white spirit or similar to wipe it down. Clean the holes on the mast and put back together again and maintain the washing down throughout the year.

At the top of the mast there is a plastic fitting with a plastic wheel inside it that the main halyard goes over to pull up the mainsail.

This fitting needs to have a penny size washer put either side of the wheel and done up tightly to stop the halyard from jamming between the wheel and the fitting during hoisting and dropping of the mainsail.

- **Mast Tracks coming off:**

The plastic tracks on older boats do have a tendency to become brittle and snap off at various points.

It is easy to replace the track, again at not much cost but with a few man hours. Getting the track off isn't complicated but does require some patience as it comes off in small bits.

How??

- a) Removed the old track
- b) Run some sand paper over the bare bit of the mast to get rid of any remaining glue and wipe down with a cleaning agent.
- c) Now you can stick the new track on. You need to hire the 'tool for the job'. LDC can supply this. They will happily post it to you and you post it back.
It's a 2 nozzle dispensing gun which you run along the mast and the put the track on afterwards.

Another problem is the track feeders coming off.

You need to reposition the hole and move the feeder up or down the track, don't just rivet it on glue it as well and it will last a long time!

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- **Spreaders:**

The max spreader deflection that everyone in the class is allowed to use is there for a reason. It's so that you don't invert your mast too much in the upper sections and break it. Not only are you breaking the class rules but also run the risk of breaking the mast.

Check that your spreaders aren't bent or misshaped at all. The lower spreader does wear out on the front side due to the crew's trapeze wire rubbing on it and needs to be replaced probably yearly.

- **Wire Rigging:**

The wire rigging is very obvious, quite simply if it is starting to look a bit bare on the threads then replace it straight away.

With regards to trapeze wires these do have a habit of breaking and you need to check the crimping of the 2 wires, again if in doubt replace it.

- **Snapping of rope Halyards:**

Easy and simple to put this problem right just move the knot at the top of your mast every 6- 8 weeks. They either go in the cleat or wear out on the top of the mast just below the knot.

Kite halyards wear out fairly quickly and you can again keep moving the knot that you tie to the head of the kite to reposition where the cleat grips the halyard to prolong it.

A nice neat and tapered halyard combined with good blocks will ensure a quick clean easy hoist by your crew every-time!

THE HULL

The hulls are very light weight and strong but only stay that way if you look after them and cover up any little dings or cracks.

- **Corrosion**

Always wash your boats down after sailing in salty water to prevent the build up of salt corrosion.

- **Cracks and flaking**

If you do hit something in the water, however minor, have a good check around the boat to see if there is any cracking or flaking of gelcoat.

If there is usually a sticker or some tape will do to finish the event but afterwards you should get it professionally repaired

The back of daggerboard cases are a constant battle to keep in tip top condition.

Any slight grounding with the plate and a hole or cracking will appear at the back of the case and often this is where your boat will be leaking from.

Easy to repair though:

How?

1. Turn the boat on to its stern
2. File away any loose bits of gelcoat
3. Allow to dry and put in a new layer of gelcoat or any hard resin for that matter and allow to dry.
4. I find it best to overfill the back of the case and file away to get board to fit again rather than having a sloppy board.

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The hull continued...

The hull around the kite pole has been known to crack on a few boats and in some extreme cases actually pull out all together.

There is little you can do to stop this other than keeping an eye on it and if cracking appears get it looked at asap - it will be cheaper than waiting until it fails completely.

- **Good Ventilation**

Put some hatches in the hull.

A lot of us have cut out hatches in the stern of the 800 to help facilitate the drying of the boat and stop them from sweating up.

The older boats would certainly benefit from this modification to get a bit of air circulation and help them to dry.

Even if your boat has never leaked it will still have moisture in it.

A few people have put hatches in the front of the boats under the spinnaker socks as well. Personally I think this is a little awkward and being in a low level area of the boat I think it causes more problems than it solves.

Another place to put them is on the side tanks but this does look a little unsightly.

- **Polishing**

Why not treat your hull to a polish now and then to keep all the nasty water from attaching itself to your lovely hull.

The Teflon polishes are great and you will be amazed when you first get in your boat how slippery it feels. You can also rub out little scores with wet and dry and polish over afterwards and you would never know they were there.

FOILS

The Foils are very well made on the 800 but again they need to be taken care of.

- **Repairs**

As soon as a small ding or crack appears in either the rudder or the daggerboard you need to repair them to stop them going soft and taking water on board.

Really easy to fix with gelcoat and then simply rub down again to get a smooth finish.

The trailing edges are very important on these type of boats. If you get a high pitched humming noise downwind then you need to do a little sanding down of the trailing edge.

- **Daggerboard**

Handy tip for the daggerboard when sailing in shallow waters is not to put the board right down but to leave 2 to 3 inches up so that the angled bit on the front of the board wont dig into the case of the boat if you do go aground as the rim of the case is tight against the board and cant pivot forward and put a hole at the front of the case.

- **Rudder**

If your rudder feels heavy when sailing chances are it isn't right down and may need an adjustment of the hole where the downhaul from goes through it. Check the rudders positioning against somebody else's in the dinghy park. If it isn't right down the forces on the pintles are extreme and could cause them to shear off.

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- **General Foils Protection**

Try to keep your nice shiny foils in the bags as long as possible at events and certainly while trailing to prevent them from being damaged.

SAILS:

The sails we use are prone to UV light and if left out in extreme sunlight for a period of time will begin to fade, go brittle and lead to a short life span.

- **UV Protection & General Care**

When in places like Garda leave the sails in the bags provided for the sails to the very last minute to prolong them.

The 800 sails don't stretch very much but do tear easily if you jump on them or catch them on another boat etc , make sure they are repaired properly asap.

The kite is made of a very lightweight soft material which is great for speed but not that good at longevity. When repairing the kites that have small tears or niks in them you will have to sew a little patch on the kite rather than trying to stick spinnaker tape on as it will fall straight off at the first hoist.

RACKS:

The racks are made of aluminium and coated in a black paint, the paint is not just for show. It also protects the aluminium from corrosion.

- **Corrosion**

If the paint is worn or scraped off the salt will eat into the rack and weaken it and get under the paintwork and start to bubble up the surrounding areas.

The usual areas where the paint wears away is underneath the hoops that hold the racks in and on the fittings that lead to the kicker and cunningham controls.

The hoops that hold the racks down to the hull can easily be taken off and covered by an outer core of rope and bolted back down again to prevent scratching between the two.

If bubbling does occur on the rack then get it recoated.

BOOMS:

The boom by and large needs very little attention

- **Gooseneck Fittings & Wear Protection**

One thing in particular has popped up and that is to check the rivets in the boom plug that joins to the gooseneck.

A couple of boats have had boom plugs break on them due to the incorrect rivets fitted or through corrosion of existing rivets and need to be replaced.

You do need to put a piece of plastic on the boom where it hits the shroud or overtime the boom will be worn away and weaken.

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CONCLUSION

There are many more tips that will help you look after your boat, the sails, the spars and the sails.

Please contact a member of the committee if you have any questions, queries or have any specific recurring problems with your boat.

Further Reading

Making your RS800 Legal and Fast, by Spod Olive. Available on the RS website www.rs-association.com under tuning.