

RS 700 Gybing – Andy White

Unlike most asymmetric boats and as I am sure if you have been sailing an RS700 for a while, or even once, you will probably notice that you have not got that added benefit of a crew to help you gybe.

This presents a number of problems apart from the obvious one of not having any body to blame when you stop dead or even worse, take a swim:

When the wind is sufficient for you to be trapezing down wind, and as soon as you come in off the wire boat speed is lost the apparent wind goes forward as you steer further down wind to balance the boat, thus a far trickier gybing scenario occurs compared to the luxury of a crew providing ballast and speed.

Then there's the obvious, of having too many jobs and not enough hands.

The way I approach these problems in a 700 is to break the manoeuvre down into stages and eliminate stages depending on the wind strength, risk and loss of distance and speed.

For example in Medium winds, is it quicker to ease the main into the gybe then have to pull in on again once the gybe is complete, slowing the time into the gybe and losing speed, or just leave the main cleated knowing it will be in slightly the wrong position for a couple of seconds, but allowing you to enter the gybe with more speed and get on the wire quicker out of the gybe.

I am sure that everybody has their own way of gybing but these are the stages I would run through assuming that I am trapezing downwind with the main cleated near the centre prior to the manoeuvre.

1. Put spinnaker sheet into my tiller hand, to prevent the spinnaker from flapping and speed loss.
2. With the free hand lift up on the handle
3. In windy conditions or for a risk free gybe, sit on the wing to maintain speed and balance, reach in and dump the main.
4. Grab new spinnaker sheet and pull in, drop old sheet. The spinnaker should now set straight away as you complete the gybe. It's better to over sheet than under sheet the spinnaker at this stage than, so it will defiantly fill and not twist on the new gybe. Over sheeting will also hide the spinnaker behind the main, is more controllable than when the kite is flapping, and it's far easier to ease sheet to the correct position than pull it in.
5. Steer through the gybe and cross the boat holding the new spinnaker sheet
6. Set spinnaker in correct position, sit on the wing and head up slightly.
7. Pull in the main
8. Clip on and get out on the wire.

Obviously some of these stages cannot be omitted depending on weather the priority is just to stay upright with sails flapping in survival conditions or to lose as little distance and gain through a tactical manoeuvre.

The best way to improve is to simply practice and find out when you can or cannot include stages.