

LIFESLING / SEATTLE SLING

Commentary:

The article below is reproduced in full from US Sailing. It covers various situations, using the Lifesling that is mounted on the push pit on all our yachts. It does assume a level of competence to be able to hove to & manoeuvre confidently under sail alone.

Any MOB incident will be a unique event, however, some thinking & practice will enable you to develop basic patterns that can be modified in the event. This is so much better than having to work it out from scratch when your partner, child or friend is already in the water!

*Keeping the yacht near the person in the water has great benefits. One **SIMPLE** method is to put helm into wind & hold it there (lock it over) while sheeting the mainsail. This action, at the very least will stop the yacht in a minimum distance. The yacht will continue to slowly turn in circles.*

This is a stable situation from where you can start to plan the recovery. It may be the case that the most expedient course of action is to use the engine to get back to the casualty.

Chris Williams July 2011.

Article from US Sailing

MAN OVERBOARD-QUICK-STOP & THE LIFESLING

Preamble:

When a crew member goes over the side recovery time is of the essence. In an effort to come up with a recovery system that is simple and lightning quick, the US Yacht Racing Union Safety at Sea Committee, the US Naval Academy Sailing Squadron, the Cruising Club of America Technical Committee and the Sailing Foundation of Seattle, Washington, joined forces to conduct extensive research and sea trials. The result of their collaboration is the "Quick-Stop" method of man-overboard recovery. The hallmark of this method is the immediate reduction of boat speed by turning in a direction to windward and thereafter manoeuvring at modest speed, remaining near the victim. In most instances, this is superior to the conventional procedure of reaching off, then either jibing or tacking and returning on a reciprocal course.

QUICK-STOP

1. Shout "man overboard" and, if available, designate a crew member to spot the victim's position in the water. The spotter should not take his eyes off the victim (see Figure 1 below).
2. Provide immediate flotation. Deeply buoyed objects such as cockpit cushions, rolled-up PFDs (Personal Flotation devices) kept handy to the helmsman, life rings and so on. These objects may not only come to the aid of the victim, but will "litter the water" where he went overboard and help your spotter to keep him in view.

It was determined that deployment of the standard man-overboard pole rig (Dan buoy) required too much time. The pole rig is saved to "put on top" of the victim in case the initial manoeuvre is unsuccessful.

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3. IMMEDIATELY bring boat head-to-wind and beyond (see Figure 1).
4. Allow sail to back and further slow the boat.
5. Continue to turn with headsail backed until wind is abaft the beam.
6. Course is stabilised on this beam-to-broad reach for two or three lengths then altered to nearly dead downwind.
7. Drop the headsails while keeping the mainsail centred (or nearly so). The jib sheets are not slacked, even during the dousing manoeuvre, to keep them inside the lifelines.
8. Hold the downward course until victim is abaft the beam.
9. Gybe the boat.
10. Approach the victim on a course approximately 45 degrees to 60 degrees off the wind.
11. Establish contact with the victim with heaving line or other device. The Naval Academy uses a "throwing sock" containing 75 feet of light floating line and a kapok bag that can be thrown into the wind because the line is kept inside the bag and trails out as it "flies" to the victim.
12. Effect recovery over the windward side.

* Spinnakers

The same procedure is used to accommodate a spinnaker. Follow the preceding instructions. As the boat comes head-to-wind and the pole is eased quickly to the head stay. The spinnaker halyard is quickly lowered and the sail is gathered on the foredeck. The turn is continued through the tack and the approach phase commences.

* Yawls and Ketches

Experiment with your mizzen sail. During sea trials, it was determined that the best procedure was to drop the mizzen; as soon as it is convenient to do so during the early phase of the ' Quick-Stop.

* Use of the Engine

The use of the engine is not required. Although it is advisable to start the diesel, but keep it in neutral during the Quick-Stop phase unless it is needed in the final approach.

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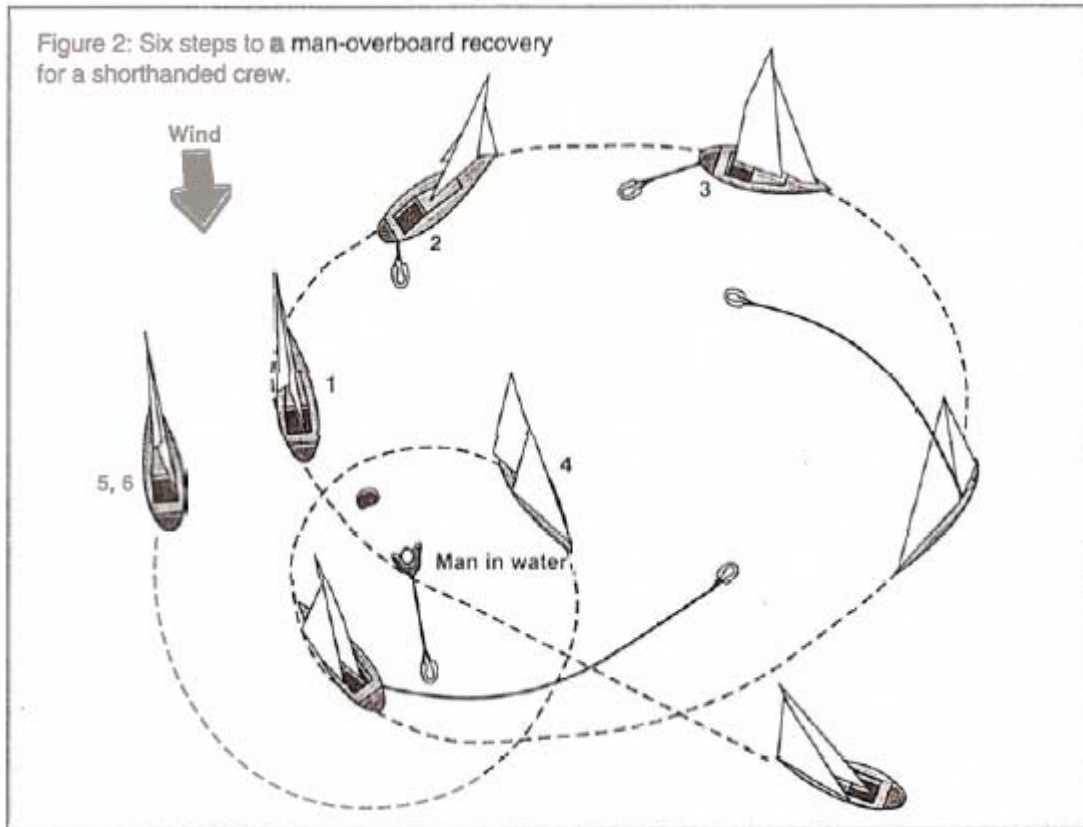
Shorthanded Crews

When there are only two people sailing together and a man-overboard accident occurs, the remaining crew member may have difficulty in handling the recovery alone. If the victim has sustained injuries, getting him back aboard may be almost impossible.

The Quick-Stop method is simple to effect by a single hander with only one alteration to the procedure, the addition of a specialised piece of equipment called the "Seattle Sling", a floating horse collar device that doubles as a hoisting sling. The Seattle Sling (illustrated on the following page) is attached to the boat by a length of floating line three or four times the boat's length. When a crew member falls overboard the scenario should proceed as follows:

1. A cushion or other flotation is thrown while the boat is brought immediately head-to-wind slowed and stopped (Figure 2).
2. The Seattle Sling is deployed by opening the bag that is hung on the stern pulpit and dropping the sling into the water. It will trail out astern and draw out the remaining line.
3. Once deployed, the boat is sailed in a wide but tightening circle. The intention is to make the line trailing astern (not the sling itself) make contact with the casualty.
4. The jib is not tended but is allowed to back from the head-to wind position, which increases the rate of turn.
5. –Contact is established with the casualty by the line and the sling being drawn inward by the boat's circling. The casualty then places the sling over his head & under his arms. The device must now be tightened to prevent it slipping off.
6. After this, the boat is put head to wind & the sails doused. As the boat drifts slowly backward, the crew begins pulling the sling and the casualty towards the boat, using a winch as necessary. This should continue until the casualty is pulled up, head & shoulders out of the water, so that he cannot fall out & is safe from further immersion.

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