



Tickle your Melges 24 A guide to speeding up your Melges 24 of any age

By Erik Shampain

In a true one design class of which the Melges 24 surely is, little things can add up into a small advantage. As we all know in one design, a small advantage can go a long way. So, in no particular order:

****Remember: You should contact the builder or local measurer before performing any structural work!!!**

- In older boats, the mast can slightly compress into the deck. This makes it hard to keep rig tension. If your mast is pushing into the deck, you're allowed to fix it. This is easily done by removing the mast base and compression post. With a 1.5" hole saw, drill four holes in an even pattern in the mast base's footprint. Measure the deck thickness and cut 1.5" G-10 tube to fit. You can re-install the compression post, drop the delrin tube in and grind the delrin tube until flush with the deck as well.
Just before you reinstall the compression post, you should check to see that the structure that the post sits on is solid. I have heard of a case where the beam that the post sits on was "crushing". True or not, you must check as these steps are vital to keeping rig tension and a stiff boat.
- New boats come with "knees" installed under the deck by the aft stansion. These "knees" reduce the cracking around the stansions from extreme hiking. The rules allow you to order the knees and install them yourself or send your boat to the factory to be done. This is a must do!
- A single pin for the rudder pin is nice. Mainly it reduces the play in the rudder system and theoretically spreads the rudder loads more evenly around the rudder and stern. This is a process that is harder, more time-consuming, and more costly then you would think.
- Simple: A second tack line cleat used in breezier conditions will prevent a nasty shrimping! We put ours on the back of the cabin about 4" behind the current cleat.
- Add a second spinnaker halyard cleat. Usually this is mounted on a semi-custom plate that holds both spinnaker halyard cleats.
- Use the two-part main halyard with the purchase down below. This allows you to take the initial stretch out of the halyard when you raise the mainsail and you don't have to worry about the halyard slipping while you're sailing. Only use Vectran and use a small disk to prevent the knot and headboard from jamming into the crane.
- Knot meter. Very good. You will know if you're down-speed before the guy next to you. This has proven a great tool. It must be the paddle-wheel kind as the GPS- based knot meters are not quick enough or smooth enough to show small speed differences.
- For weight aloft, make sure your main halyard and backstay are minimum size. The backstay is required to have a breaking strain of no less than 2,095 pounds. Spinnaker

halyards should be light and spectra-based. A ¼” or 5/16” Samson Warspeed works great. We don’t taper this for fear of jumping the halyard shive.

- Mainsheet – Easy. Attach the aft mainsheet block directly to the boom, not on a short pennant. As you drop the traveler in breeze, the mainsheet tightens. This is generally bad. Maximizing the “arc” (distance between traveler-mainsheet block-mainsheet cleat) minimizes the tightening of the mainsheet when the traveler drops.
- It is normal for the aft edge of the bulkhead structure inside the boat to crack with age. It is allowable in the rules to fix this. Simple. Grind away a 4” x 18” box centered along the aft edge and lay down 2-4 layers of fiberglass.
- Traveler cleats. There are now various ways to set up the traveler so that you can cleat the low side from the high side. This is very nice, especially for the 4 man crews. We use a nice bracket that holds a second cleat facing the other side of the boat.
- We added an inspection port in the back of the cockpit. This allows you to check on all of the bolts associated with the rudder and backstay. It can also allow you to get water out of the boat when on a trailer after a regatta!
- If you look at the new boats, all of the backstay purchase turning blocks (under traveler area) are together. Old boats have the port turning block on the opposite side of the mainsheet block. Move that block next to the other block. There is a spot to put it so that it misses the mainsheet cleat base, the traveler posts, and the engine hatch. This gives you a little more throw when you really need it.
- Get the Hutchinson lifeline pads. Worth their weight in gold. A must do!!!
- Class rules allow for a cover of some sort over the port jib sheet block. This is necessary to keep the port spinnaker sheet from getting sucked in. There are some custom carbon pieces coming on the market that are nice. I HAD a simple sail cloth piece that covered it and it worked well. Now we use the Ronstan “flip flop” block for our jib sheets and the spin sheets never catch. These blocks are nice as they “flip” up to always face the trimmer. So light air roll tacking or prestart standing, the block faces the trimmer for less friction and more accurate trimming.
- Keep a good coat of Teflon or “PTFE” based polish on the hull. This keeps it slippery and retards the growth when the boat is in the water.
- Add a safety line and cleat to the outhaul externally. Easy & be safe.

This list is always expanding!

Erik sailed with Dave Ullman in the 2005 Worlds and currently competes with Alan Field and the “WTF” USA-587 team from California.

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