



Bladerider X8 – Racing Help Notes

Written by Rohan Veal
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5.1 Starting

There are two options when it comes to starting. The first is where you gybe backwards and forwards along the line until basically you have no time left and you start. The goal here is that you are airborne when the start gun goes and you have maximum speed. This technique is suited to light airs, but it is risky as you may not be in the best position, but at least you will be fast off the line and in clear air.

The second technique requires confidence in your ability to fly at any moment and having a clear goal of where you want to start (ie on port or starboard and at the boat or pin end of the line). You basically hang back at least 50m from the position of where you want to start, and then attack the position with flight and speed at about 10-15 seconds to go. As the boats are so fast, positions open and close on the line all the time, so there are always opportunities.

The main point with both techniques is that you have top speed on the gun, clear air and are heading to favoured side of the course. There is no real right or wrong technique as I have been known to be well windward of the start boat at 10 seconds to go, but reach down fast to the line into an opening under the line, and then head up instantly. This technique is suited to shorter lines where there is less room or there is mid line sag.

5.2 Upwind Tactics

As tacking speeds on the Bladerider are somewhat fast compared to other high performance boats, it is recommended to tack on the shifts rather than hold a tack to the corners. It is also vitally important to sail towards the oncoming pressure if you see it coming.

5.3 Top Mark rounding

The bear-away is pretty simple but scary for some to some due to the immediate acceleration. As you pull the tiller toward you slowly, the boat bears away with speed and pressure down on the hull causing the boat to press back down in the water. If the wand is set up correctly, the wand will adjust the foiling height and keep a neutral altitude.

However the helm needs to be alert to use rudder foil to pitch the bow up or down to keep the boat longitudinally level, just in case a wave appears in front. The object is to prevent the boat pitching too high or too low and the hull going back into the water, so there may be a little bit of trim needed while bearing away. At the same time keep it laterally level or heeled to windward. Not much sheet or sail control adjustment is needed (because the apparent wind changes so little at this point.)

If after bearing away you want to bear away further and sail fast downwind you can let a little downhaul off and a little vang to get a little more power from the sail and allow the boat to go lower. With a flat sail it is hard to go low and fast. The lighter the wind, the more downhaul and vang should be let off. However it is important to not adjust any control lines until the skipper has complete control of the boat and there is no risk of launching or bunny-hopping the boat.



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5.4 Downwind Tactics

The objective in light to moderate condition is look behind and to the sides constantly for pressure. Always position yourself to sail into the pressure as most of the time, you will sail faster than the wind, and therefore may have to sail high to get the back of the pressure and sail through it.

In bigger wind and waves, it is important to keep control of the boat at all times. If there is a risk of launching, always sail lower and slower to maintain a safe altitude and a good VMG. If necessary, stall the sail by using more mainsheet tension, plus more downhaul and vang than normally used downwind.

5.5 Gybe Mark Rounding

A good gybe is critical for a fast downwind leg. A lot of time can be lost if a gybe is not clean, ie airborne the whole time. Therefore as you approach a gybe, wait for flat water, regardless of how far past the layline you may have gone, and bear away until the boat slows down to a comfortable speed. Grab the mainsheet ropes together and throw the boom across to the new leeward side, whilst keeping the hull as flat as possible using pressure from on the side of the gunwhales.

In light to moderate winds, it is important to round up as fast as possible to get to the new apparent wind into the sail. Once done so, you can bear away to pick up your VMG. In heavy winds, keeping the wings out of the water is most important, as this will slow you down and more than likely tip you over if the boat is heeled to one side.

5.6 Bottom Mark Rounding

The opposite applies following a leeward mark rounding. It is important to take a wide rounding and apply the required upwind downhaul, outhaul and vang tension, well before rounding the mark. If you turn too fast you run the risk of hitting the water and slowing down very fast.