

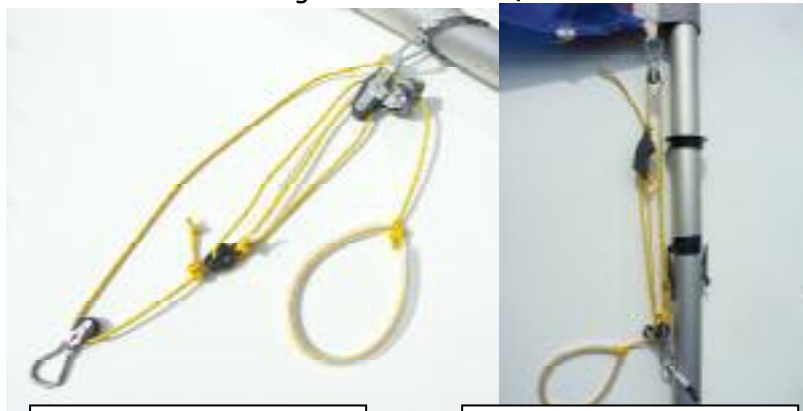
THE NEW RULE CHANGES

So what's new? What's worth changing? How do we do it? Will the changes be expensive?

The Topper has always been a great boat, the changes that have recently been allowed will ensure that it continues to be a great boat into the foreseeable future. Equally all the changes are optional so you only need do what is best for you but don't dismiss them as a fad.

4.2 Sail - wow! We are going to see 8 and 9 year old Topper sailors and the smaller older ones having fun alongside the bigger sailors. The small sail is really inexpensive and it's pretty quick in the hands of a 30 - 40kg sailor. It doesn't require a new mast or a change of controls so let's encourage those at our clubs who were thinking about sailing a square boat to try the new rig.

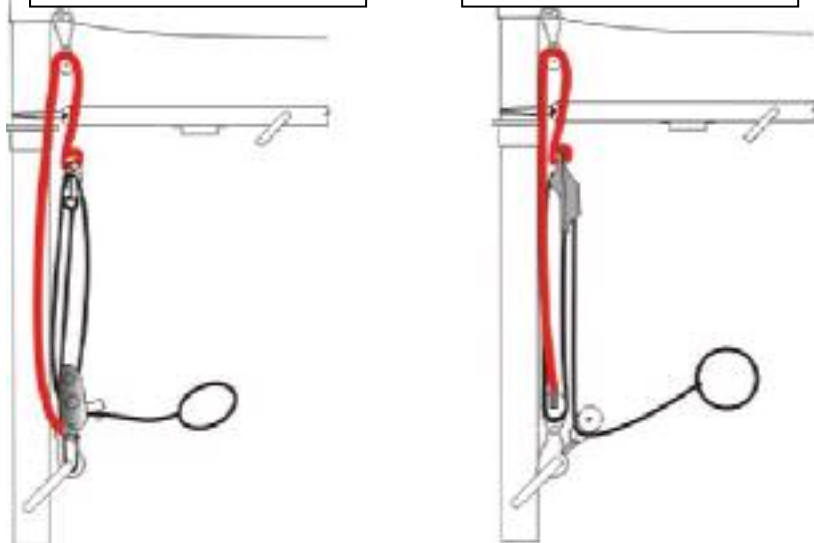
6:1 Downhaul - without doubt the second most important change is the change from a maximum purchase of a 3:1 to one of 6:1. It will allow much lighter and less experienced sailors to sail in strong winds. The extra force available will mean we can bend the mast to flatten the sail whilst keeping the fullness in the sail well forward. The effect will be to stop the boat heading into the wind on a beat and getting stuck in irons when tacking. It is inexpensive, in most cases, to adapt your present 3:1 and is only a little tricky to set up. At its least expensive it can be a metre of rope and it's most expensive it's an extra block and a stronger carabine hook (the later because of the extra loads)



CLAMCLEAT TYPE

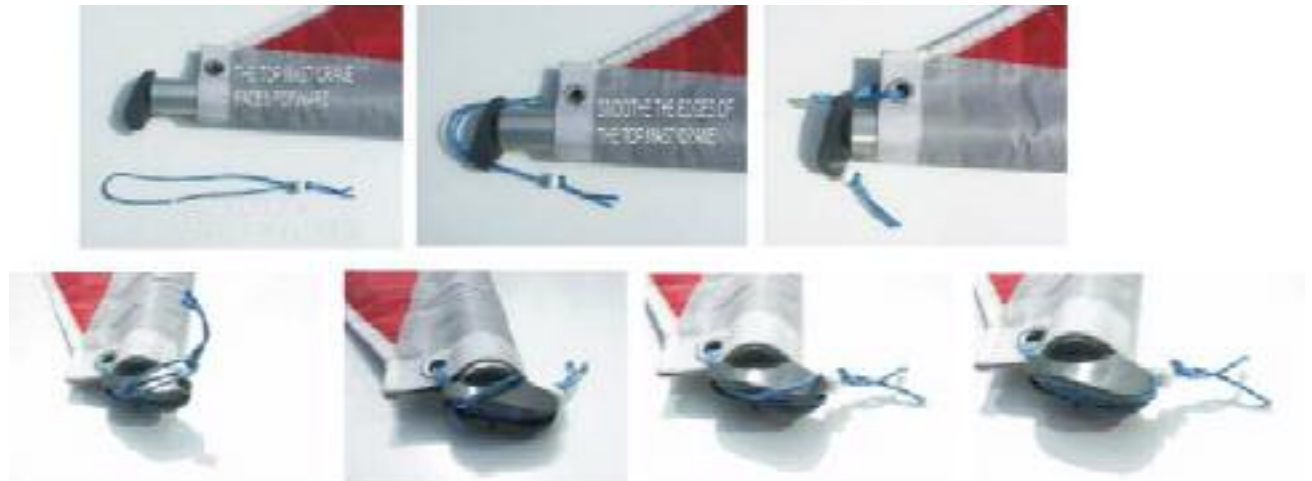
KICKER TYPE

This is a 'must change' for lighter sailors and a 'should change' for heavier ones. The later will benefit from finer control of the amount of downhaul used. Lubricating the mast with a drylube will make sure it releases well.



Halyard - well removing the halyard actually! Halyards stretch and the number of sails I see that have come 50mm down the mast is legion. This is 50mm closer to the water and worse still 50mm closer to your head when gybing! In addition the downhaul doesn't work with a stretchy halyard so why not throw it away?

Once again it's not difficult when you know how and I will have a sample with me at events, so please do ask, but here goes. Make a halyard loop as follows - start with 750mm of 3mm Spec 12 and a small bobble. Fold the rope in half, tie the tails of the rope together 30mm from the end and feed the bobble against this knot. Reverse the top mast fitting (or turn the top mast around) and loop the sail on as in the pictures.



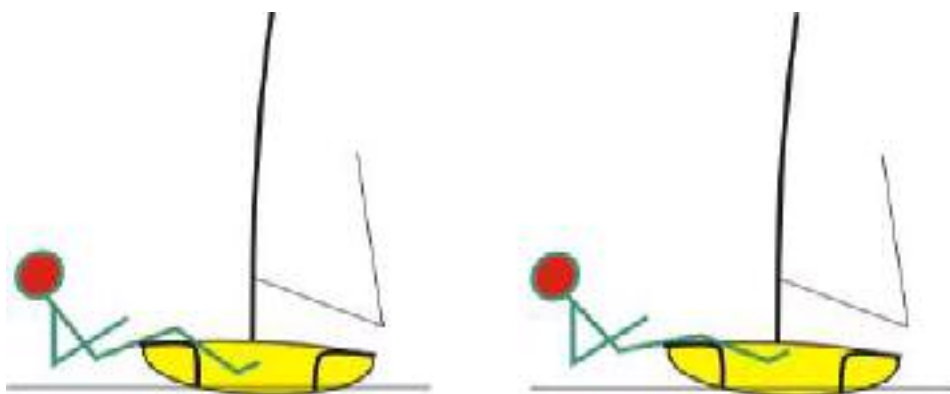
The final part involves tensioning the rope by pulling it over the cheeks of the fitting. Getting the lengths right is tricky but it does work.

Mast and Boom Webbing - this cannot be retro-fitted and will just mean that the next masts and boom you buy will last longer (so sailing a Topper should be less expensive). If we break masts and booms in the future perhaps we will have to admit that we are using them a little beyond their design specification!

Rubber Extension Joint - all modern boats use rubber joints on extensions because they have less slack and allow us to steer more accurately. If you decide to change then you will need to choose between a plain rubber one (about £3) or one with rope through the middle (about £10). The rope one allows you to get home when the joint breaks. On the other hand if you unclip the extension off your tiller arm when you leave it then the black rubber one will last for ages. What you must do is check for cracks regularly and do have a spare available. In the picture below the roped rubber joint is in white.



Centre Toestrap - we are now allowed any length of centre strap we want and I expect some of you will be experimenting even now but do so with care. It's always a balance between being long enough to be comfortable and short enough so you are locked into the boat and you don't feel as if you are 'floating' when hiking. Lasers have a crude adjustable system that uses rope. It allows the sailor to be 'locked into the boat' (short strap) when they need to be (upwind in certain waves and downwind most of the time) but comfortable (long strap) when upwind hiking. An adjustable toestrap has yet to be designed for Toppers, as I write this, so any length you set will be a compromise. Certainly the most important thing is to feel comfortable when hiking because you should be able to do it for longer. Comfortable will mean different lengths for different sized sailors of course. Pressure points, from the sidedecks for instance, should be avoided and a flat hiking style will lift your bottom out of the water and give you more leverage.



One possible answer if a toestrap that can be lengthened or shortened ashore by having optional hole positions like the picture below.



In this example there are two pairs of holes at each end of the strap. They are adjustable ashore only and can be set for different sizes of sailor. In the past we have tried to make 'one size fits all'. The new rules must be better but needs some careful experimenting to get right.

Well there you go. The Topper has been brought right up to date with these changes and the change to centre-main and longer extension last year (hard to believe that was only 14 months ago!). We can look forward to a boat that is more controllable, more user friendly, costs less to campaign (the sails are £130 cheaper and spars should last longer) and looks thoroughly modern. Let's enjoy what we now have - no more changes for a while eh!

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