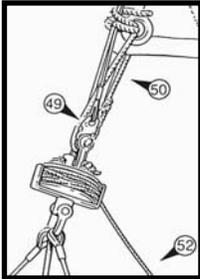


Supercharge Your Dart 15

The Dart 15 is a one-design boat. Does that mean there is nothing that can be changed to make it go faster or easier to sail? Of course not. In some cases rule changes (e.g. 3:1 downhaul) have allowed modifications to be made. In other cases no parts are required. This article is really aimed as sailors new to the class who want to go a bit faster, but hopefully there are ideas here that other class members will find helpful. It is not exhaustive by any means, so hopefully other Dart Fifteeners will add to the list in future articles.

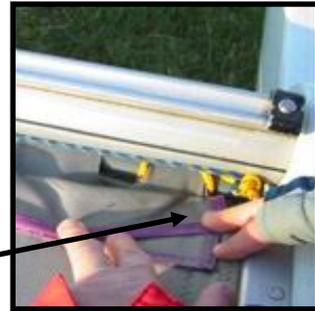


Shorten the Forestay

The standard length forestay is OK if the furling drum is not fitted to the boat, but is too long otherwise. Take the forestay to a chandler and get 2" taken off the length. Then use a thin piece of rope between the forestay and the drum shackle (1m of 3mm Dyneema works well). This has more than enough strength, makes for easier boat rigging and allows the rig tension to be adjusted for light (loose) or strong (tighter) winds.

Replace the Tramp Rope

With a longer rope, a loop around each end of the trampoline tube is possible. You have to use the first hank several times, but the trampoline can be pulled much tighter with the rope threaded this way as it pulls more directly along the bolt rope. The tighter the tramp, the less movement between the hulls and beams and the faster you go, in theory.



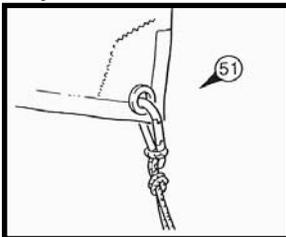
Extra loop



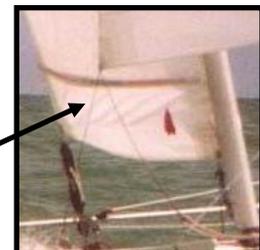
Replace Old White Tramp Hanks

Some boats, particularly older ones, or ones with incorrect replacements have white trampoline hanks. These break and don't allow the trampoline to be tightened enough. When the proper translucent hanks are used, they plastically deform without breaking.

Replace the Jib Hook



The supplied jib hook is heavy and dents the mast when hoisting the jib in strong winds. A better alternative is a shackle or tying the rope from the blocks directly through the eye on the sail.



Blocks tied directly to sail without hook

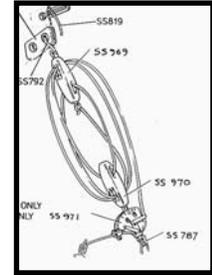


Get Some Grippy Tape

Fitting the grippy tape makes a big difference to stability and confidence on the trapeze. The toe loops are still useful, particularly when reaching or in big waves, but the tape is worth every penny. The black tape here is from Sawford Marine, but it is available at most chandlers. The boat needs to be dry and clean for it to stick permanently!

Use the Correct Rope for the Mainsheet

Rope is rope surely? Not when it comes to the mainsheet. Use the wrong rope and it can slip through the cleat or more often it just won't run through the blocks when sheeting out in lighter winds. When the correct 8-plait rope is used (Steve Sawford has the correct lengths ready-made) the difference is clear to see.

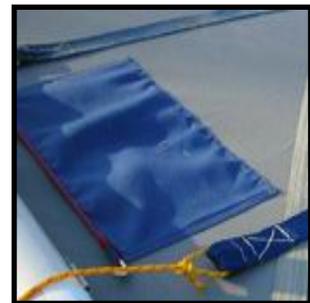


Buy and Use a Burgee

It is surprising the number of boats that are sailed without a burgee. They are not expensive, illegal, complicated or heavy and they are the most valuable source of information when on a run in all conditions and on all points of sailing in light winds. Particularly when un-rigged, boats without them miss most of the windshifts when running and lose a lot of ground as a result. They even look nice!

Use the Tramp Bag

There are two benefits from keeping the mast pin on the boat. Firstly it is always at hand when dropping the mast; secondly in very light winds it can be used to stop the mast from slopping around when on a long reach or run. **Don't forget to take it out before gybing!** Here the pin is on elastic and slipped into the top hem of the tramp bag.



Another use for the bag is to store a drink. A lot of fluid is lost when wearing wet or dry suits and this contributes to fatigue during the later part of the race. I remember crewing on a Hurricane once, we just crossed the finish line and on the short sail back the helm reached into the bag pulled out a can of coke, downed it in one, belched (well he was a hurricane sailor) and said "I needed that". Yes about half an hour ago probably.....

Tighten the Toestraps



The tighter the toestraps, the less effort it seems to take to hike out. It is also much easier to get back in the boat as your feet aren't as high! The boat on the left has the Velcro tension adjustment at the front. It is almost impossible to get these tight enough and they should be replaced with ones with rope at the front. A good rule of thumb is that the straps should be tight enough so they don't touch the tramp (right) and the tighter the better.



Replace the Traveller Rollers

These are now available from suppliers other than the Laser centre and are more affordable (they used to be almost £16 for a set!). If you sail most weekends it is worth replacing them at least once per season. This helps when letting the traveller off upwind. If the corners of one end of the traveller track are filed slightly it is possible to get the car off and replace the rollers without taking the boat apart.

Empty the Boat Out

Not only is water heavy, it gets absorbed into the resin over time making the weight gain permanent. It is surprising how much water can get in through chips in the skegs, the beams and the hatches themselves. Empty the boat out each time it comes off the water.

Check Your Rudder Alignment

If the rudders are out of line your boatspeed will be seriously affected. There are two ways of checking this. One way is with a tape measure. With the rudders down measure the distance between the front of the port and starboard blades then the back (at the same point on the rudder). The measurements should be the same within a couple of mm. An easier way is to stand 5m back from the boat and look along the rudders when they are down (support the boat on the trolley with the bows down). Position one rudder so it exactly points towards the bow. You should be able to see the back and front of the rudder in line with each other and the bow. Then look at the other rudder, it should be exactly in line with the bow also. I experienced this problem last year when I bought new rudder stocks then went slower for a few months. When I checked the alignment the rudders were so far out that the connecting bar had to be shortened by 10mm! The fact that the rudders were loose in the old stocks had allowed them to align when sailing and this wasn't happening with the replacements.



George Carter
Dart 15 1818