



INSIDER TIPS FROM THE TOP IN THE MELGES 24 CLASS

The Melges 24 class boasts some of the top sailors in the world. Quantum reached out to a number of them to get their insider tips on Melges 24 racing to help you and your campaign be as successful as possible.

SET UP & TUNING

Racing starts before the boat is in the water. Always make sure the shroud turnbuckles are cleaned with a toothbrush and denatured alcohol and then greased with Tef-Gel. Nothing is more difficult than trying to put turns on upwind in 18-20 knots while semi-hiking and hearing them grind. You could really hurt yourself. Also, bring at least three rig tools and keep one on you at all times. Allen keys work fine as well for rig tools. Find one thin enough to fit between the studs yet strong when the turnbuckles start to bottom out.

WILSON STOUT
Bowman on M24 Lucky Dog

If the boat is sailing in a high and slow mode upwind in breeze over 15 knots, the rig is probably too loose. It's time to tighten the upper and lowers to depower. This added tension will help tighten the headstay and keep the rig from over bending, which is always fast in breeze.

JOHN BOWDEN
Trimmer on M24 Lucky Dog & Quantum Sails M24 Expert

I like to use a plastic halyard ball on the Melges 24 spinnaker halyard. Put the halyard through the ball and tie a small tight overhand knot under the ball. Make sure you leave room to tie a bowline around the head grommet on the spinnaker. The ball will keep the halyard knot from getting stuck in the halyard sheave when at max hoist. Also you will never lose the halyard thru the mast!

SCOTT NIXON
Quantum Sails M24 Expert



STARTS

The Melges 24 has small foils so starting the boat is quite hard. I try to get the teams I sail with to keep the minimum speed prestart to 2.5 or 3 knots. Any slower than this in your final approach to the line, the boat will have a lot of leeward and the boat will slide sideways. Often, you will end up too tight to the leeward boat off the line since you have slid sideways and this will cause you to lose your lane quickly off the starting line. Looking ahead to the larger fleet at the upcoming Worlds, getting off the line and living in a tight lane will be paramount to a good race.

SCOTT NIXON
Quantum Sails M24 Expert



TACTICS

Use tail end of Windex to call lay lines. When calling lay lines downwind, I use the tail end of the Windex that basically points in the direction the boat will go on the opposite gybe. Keep in mind the time it takes for the crew to get ready to gybe, radius of turn and wind strength variances on the other gybe, as they will affect the timing of the gybe and the heading on the other gybe.

RICHARD CLARKE

Tactician on M24 Zingara, M24 World Champion, Volvo Race Winner, Olympian.

TRIMMING

When racing the Melges 24 in marginal planing or lazy plane conditions, keeping a small curl and the luff of the kite firm helps to promote getting the bow up and keeping the boat moving. Also, the sheet can remain fairly static and the driver can be more aggressive with steering to the angle of heel. Marginal planing is a tough condition to master, but the Melges 24 seems to like having a firm luff on the spinnaker with a small curl to maintain consistent planing.

SAM ROGERS
Trimmer on M24 Full Throttle, Pro Sailor

One of the keys to downwind speed in planing conditions is to drop the traveler all the way to leeward. That way, you can use very soft vang tension on the mainsail. When you need power you can remove twist from the sail by simply sheeting the main harder.

ED ADAMS
Professional Sailing Coach, ROLEX Yachtsman of the Year

The mainsheet is the most important boat speed control in the Melges 24. The helmsman has his hands full with the backstay, traveler, mainsheet and tiller. Determining when to adjust backstay, traveler and sheet is not easy. If you are having a hard time hitting targets, try easing the mainsheet a bit to get the boat to release. The Melges 24 likes a little twist in the main when you are overpowered so don't be afraid to really tighten the backstay when overpowered to help the main open up and twist off. In really light air, pull the traveler to windward to help close the leech and get the boat to point.

MARTY KULLMAN
Helmsman and Tactician, Quantum Sails M24 Expert

HELM

I really try to focus on angle of heel when helming the M24. Too much heel upwind, and the boat will have excess leeway. Too flat, and it will feel like it needs power upwind. Downwind keep it simple. If the boat heels over slightly, pull the bow down and maybe have the crew help flatten the boat slightly. If the boat is too flat, simply head up to get the desired angle of heel. This will get power back into the sail plan so you sail optimum targets.

CHRIS RAST

M24 World Champion, Quantum Sails M24 Expert



BOW

As a bowman you need to be aware of your surroundings. Know where you are on the race course, where the other boats are around you on the race course and ask your tactician what he or she is thinking for your next maneuver. This will allow you to always be ready for whatever comes next and be able to execute crisp boat handling at a moment's notice.

Also, always make sure all the sheets and halyards that need to run are tidy and free to run. This sometimes requires some multi-tasking as often times you are hiking upwind and downwind. Prioritizing the order in which you do your tidy up is also important. For example on the second run, you do not need to worry about the spinnaker halyard as you can tidy it up before you drop the kite AFTER you finish the race. It is more important to make sure the spinnaker sheet can run for a gybe and then position yourself wherever you need to be for the particular mode you are sailing downwind.

BILL GOODERHAM

Bowman for M24 Zingara, Pro Sailor

When hooking up the Melges 24 spinnaker for a behind-the-shroud set, which is the class standard, it's important for the bowman to get the head of the spin out from behind the shrouds and spreader when the sail is getting hoisted in the spin set. Try to keep it on the front side of the port spreader and not behind as the head is going up in the hoist. Sometimes on the second race hoist, it can get behind the spreader and pinned by the eased mainsail. When this happens, the quick fix is for the helmsman and main trimmer to sheet the mainsail on harder so the head of the spin can get clear around the tip of the spreader for a faster hoist.

MATT PISTAY

M24 Bowman, Pro Sailor

TEAMWORK

I have always found that in marginal planing conditions, it is difficult to be competitive with the teams that are crisp at getting the boat planing and keeping it on a plane. Key components are weight placement, hiking, trim and quite simply driving. Being smooth on the helm and allowing for consistent trim and hike changes the dynamic of performance. Instead of the trimmers and team continually changing set up to compensate for erratic driving, they are able to lock in. The changes I make are three-fold: I hand the mainsheet off freeing up my focus to only steering. Put my body in a comfortable position; by being in the same spot, I create consistent helming for the team to develop consistency in their feel. Finally I listen to the tactician. A tactician consistent with his tone creates a smooth dynamic in my helming. Talking about the pressure on and off allows me to steer smoothly around the puffs and lulls. Lots of practice is required, and over time, you can create a smooth rhythm downwind.

TERRY HUTCHINSON

ROLEX Yachtsman of the Year, America's Cup Veteran, Multi Class World Champion, Quantum Sails VP



Visit Quantum Sails' Melges 24 class page for our most recent tuning guide, more tips and tricks, as well as information about our full line of sails.

If you have any questions or if there is anything you need, contact your local loft or one of our Melges 24 Gurus:

Scott Nixon | snixon@quantumsails.com | 410-268-1161 x205

Chris Rast | crast@quantumsails.com | 616-312-3860

John Bowden | jbowden@quantumsails.com | 843-754-9547

Marty Kullman | mkullman@quantumsails.com | 727-560-0164

Maxim Logutenko | mlogutenko@quantumsails.com | +74999210276



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