CENTRE MAINSHEET

A number of Enterprise sailors have experimented with a centre main sheet arrangement on their boats. The most successful system so far has been the one adopted by Peter Lawson at the Nationals. Peter merely uses the Laser approach of having a block with a becket at the end of the boom, and feeds the main sheet directly to the hand via a block mounted halfway along the boom (figure 2).

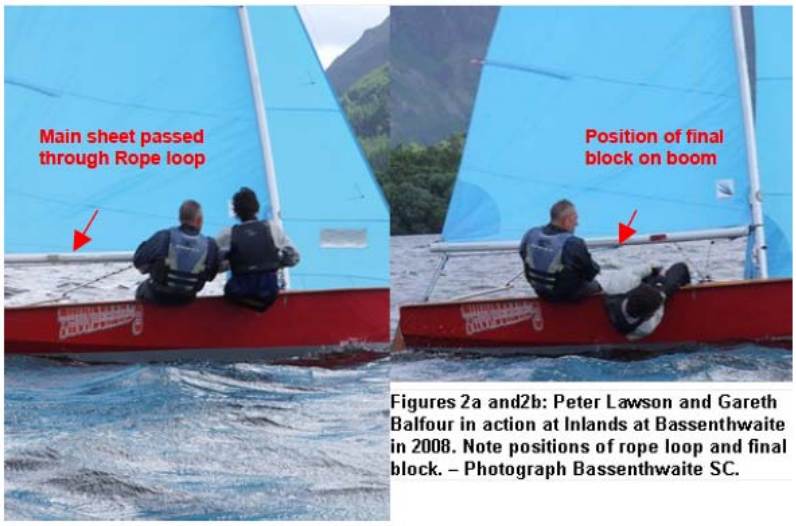
A short loop of rope is fitted between the block and the end of the boom to prevent the main
sheet sagging when not under tension.

Figure 1: Peter and Jack Lawson round the gybe mark at Absersoch – Photograph Janice Bottomley

Phil Kirk has tried a similar system, except he goes one step further, with the sheet fed to a block above the centreboard case, and then to the helm's hand. The block is positioned on the centreline at deck level with a bridle. The ends of the bridle are fixed to the centreboard case knee. Phil says that the bridle should not be made so long that it will slip over the back of the centreboard case, nor too short that you can't fully raise the centreboard.

When Phil tried this arrangement he found that the mainsheet worked well upwind, and indeed was more comfortable to sail with. Off wind he found the main sheet between the middle of the boom and the new block wanted to throttle his crew! Taking the sheet straight from the boom for off wind sailing solved the problem.

Phil's personal view is that "the centre main system is better when sailing upwind, however the aft main system is best for the Enterprise when sailing off wind."



Figures 2a and2b: Peter Lawson and Gareth Balfour in action at Inlands at Bassenthwaite in 2008. Note positions of rope loop and final block. – Photograph Bassenthwaite SC.