

The weekend of January 31st and February 1st, 2015, a group of long time Lightning Class members are gathering in Florida to decide whether the ILCA should evaluate an asymmetrical spinnaker as an alternative for our class in the future. Their efforts can be considered a “Pre-evaluation Evaluation”. Please read the status report on the project. I want to assure you that this is simply research--an investigation, a trial, a “what-if”-- and is by no means an indication of the direction the class is heading. No ILCA Funds have been used, and yet we will receive a lot of value from the investments of their personal time and funds.

Debbie Probst,
ILCA Class President

Status Report Project A-Sail **Bill Faude**

Background/Project Objective:

These days we sail primarily Windward/Leeward courses. Unless it blows over 20, we displace all over the course. As a result, most of our class competition photos show the boat displacing. This opens up the possibility that sailors unfamiliar with the Lightning think the design is tired—not exciting.

New classes like the Melges 20 and the J-70, the VX and the Viper and others enter, and gain traction and get a lot of press. A: They take sailors out of the potential pool that might have selected the Lightning. B: They create the possibility of defection by our current members toward this type of boat.

This project has a simple objective: determine if an adjustment to the Lightning downwind sail plan increasing the area of the spinnaker and making it asymmetrical would make our game more fun--particularly by allowing us to plane in lower wind ranges on courses like which we currently sail.

Activity:

In Summer 2014, private funding was secured to allow North Design Services to analyze performance of our current sail plan and complete two asymmetrical spinnaker design alternatives, both approximately 20% larger in area. Performance data for all three designs has been predicted using modeling software, predicting differences in drive force, heeling moment and helm load. This data is available to any member who would like to review it.

An on-water 'beta test' the 2 new sail configurations is scheduled for January 30-31 and Feb 1 at the Lake Monroe Sailing Association in Sanford, FL. Representatives of the Technical Committee, both builders, sailmakers, past Class Presidents, a number of former World Champions and indispensable local ILCA members are volunteering their time and investing their own funds to test and document the performance of the two A-Sails and the current symmetrical design. Digital performance information, video and still photo assets will be collected. Members can expect a download on progress from that weekend via FlashBlast as soon as one can be prepared. Indeed, members wishing to inquire or input on the testing prior to January 30 can call me at (312) 593-5153. Let me restate that no ILCA funds are being spent on this initiative. All comments are welcome.

The A-Sail Project team is also drawing from the experience of other classes who have contemplated and made transitions of this type. We are learning about the impact a significant initiative has on membership dynamics and ultimately on fleet participation. ILCA members are encouraged to read an interesting article in the January 2015 issue of *Sailing World* (Pages 44-49) for a perspective on the E-Scow's experience with such a change.

Our viewpoint is that it's important to do research like this when the class is strong...not when we are in crisis and then react to save ourselves. Again, if you have a viewpoint you'd like to share, please do so. This is an open process!