

Guide To Sails



Where can I purchase a sail? - McLaughlin stocks all brands of sails. You can find a complete listing of sails with pricing in our on line store. In addition your local Optiparts dealer can be very helpful. If you still have questions after reading what follows, give us a call and we will help you get the right set for your sailor. 1-800-784-6478

Which Racing Sail is Right for Me? - First decide whether you need a Club sail, a Practice/Race (Like the WinDesign 3.9) sail or a Racing sail.

Club Sails - Club programs will definitely want the Club Sails. They are built for long wear with an easily adjustable medium shape needed for training. Club Sails can be purchased with or without a window. More care is needed with a window sail. If creased too many times the window is more susceptible to cracking than sailcloth. Club sails come with: Durable battens and a sail bag which is intended to hold the entire rig with the sail still tied in place. When purchase with a boat these sails usually include sail ties.



3.9 Race Sail - If you have any racing ambitions at all, you should seriously consider purchasing a 3.9 Race/Practice sail. It combines the durability of a club sail with the shape and panel cuts of a racing sail, and only at a marginally higher price. The sails are perfect for regional racing and all practice sessions. The sail gets its name from the 3.9 oz Dimension sail cloth use in its construction. While only being about 1 oz heavier the material allows for a fast shape that is easily kept in the groove. That extra 1 oz gives the sail enough strength to out last a normal racing sail by 3 times. The 3.9 sail and all other race sails come in specifically design cuts matched to the weight of the sailor. These sails come with a sail bag, sail ties, tapered race battens, window, class fees button and sail numbers installed.

Race Sails - Sail makers and are constantly improving the shape and performance of their sails. While years ago we only had straight panel cut sails, today we have radial, tri radial and combination cuts. Most sail makers are using Polyant 140B sailcloth for its fine weave and superior stretch characteristics, which allow the sail to perform well over a broad range of wind conditions. These sails are never folded only rolled. Race Sails are shipped rolled up in boxes and tubes. You will find very few wrinkles in these

sails. Some of the top companies are: Olympic, Optiparts, North, Quantum (Toni Tio), Windesign and J-Sails. These sails come with numbers installed, tapered race battens, high-end sail ties, class fees button, window and a sail bag.

Different Cuts – Sails are designed to match the weight of your sailor. Some sails are made for individuals over or under 100 lbs and Olympic has at least 4 weight levels. Sails are also sewn together in different patterns. These include the original cross panel cut, radial cuts and combinations of both. Most coaches recommend the cross cut sail for beginners because they are easier to trim. The radial and newer crossbreed sails have a finer groove of performance, which requires more tuning as the wind velocity changes. If you are unsure which sail to buy we suggest you ask the advice of a coach or call us at 800 784 6478

Durability - Some people ask us, "will a more expensive racing sail make up its cost in longer life?" The answer is a resounding "NO!" Giving a brand new sailor a Racing sail for his/her primary sail is like tossing a 15 year old the keys to the Porsche and saying, "go teach yourself how to drive!" Racing sails are made with performance in mind not durability. Club / Practice/ 3.9 sails will hold their shape and last 3 to 5 times longer than as race sails.

Why Are Some Sails So Expensive? - When you purchase sails, you are paying for 3 things, fabric, construction and name brand. Fabric is simply a matter of material cost. Fabric for racing sails is: thin with a high thread count, very difficult to make and, thus very expensive. Fabric for club and practice sails is not as expensive so, they can be made more inexpensively. Construction is where the greatest cost enters. Club sails do not need to be cut and sewn perfectly and identically so, many are made in Asia. Racing sails, on the other hand, must have greater care taken in each cut and each stitch; this of course, is more expensive. But it goes much deeper than that, racing sails do not just happen, they evolve. It takes a sail maker years of sail development to reach the upper echelons of competitive sailing. Name brands in sails are important; they are insurance that you are getting the quality and performance you paid for. Buying a name brand means you can research who is winning at top levels and why. It means you can talk to coaches, sailors and parents, getting useful feedback on a known quantity. When you sail onto the racecourse that is the kind of assurance you need to win.

Tuning Guides - Racing sail Makers are looking for shapes that using the boats controls such as boom vang, outhaul etc will allow the boat to be fast in all wind conditions. As such they put out tuning guides that discuss mast rake and the tension adjustment of the controls to achieve the best performance. Many of these can be found in the FAQ section of this or the sail maker's web site.

Class legal - To be class legal the sail must have a green plastic IODA class fees paid button attached to the clew of the sail (Watch Out! Some manufacturers do not provide this). The sail should pass measurement, (most sails do!) and have the properly placed and sized: class logo, country code (USA, etc) and the boat number installed. Directions and the class rules for numbering, etc can be seen under FAQ's "Sail Numbering and Removal". If you are just starting out or sailing locally you do not

need the logo, country code etc. They can be added later for about \$35.

Measurement Certificate – At the World and Continental Championships every sail must be measured. It is very time consuming and the charge is about \$50. To avoid this McLaughlin can measure the sail and give you a certificate that you present at the event. We do not recommend you incur this expense unless your skipper is on one of these teams.