

# **Sport Psychology of Sailing**

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**Table 20.1** Controllables and uncontrollables for performance sailors

Controllables for performance sailors	Uncontrollables for performance sailors
<i>You can control...</i>	<i>You cannot control...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rig settings</li> <li>• Not worrying about other UK sailors' performance</li> <li>• Ferry bookings</li> <li>• Determination</li> <li>• Dedication</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Thoughts—positive and negative</li> <li>• Technique</li> <li>• How much you eat and drink during racing</li> <li>• Decisions</li> <li>• Reactions to "hassling" situations</li> <li>• Routines (warm-up and starting procedures)</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Fitness (injury prevention and strength/flexibility)</li> <li>• Your PR/sponsorship campaign</li> <li>• Getting time away from sailing</li> <li>• Your attitude to your crew/helm if they make a mistake</li> <li>• Communication in the boat</li> <li>• Concentration</li> <li>• Equipment preparation—i.e. spares</li> <li>• Your training programme (time on water)</li> <li>• What you say to yourself</li> <li>• Process orientation—focusing on technique rather than winning or losing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winning</li> <li>• Losing</li> <li>• Wind</li> <li>• Waves</li> <li>• Protest jury decisions</li> <li>• Mistakes by the race officer/race officials</li> <li>• Conditions</li> <li>• The performance of <i>all</i> the other sailors</li> <li>• Equipment breakages</li> <li>• Luck</li> <li>• Illness</li> <li>• Location of event</li> <li>• Tide/weather</li> <li>• Other sailors' speed breakthroughs "Technological availability"</li> <li>• The press/media</li> <li>• Accidents</li> <li>• Venues</li> </ul>

*NB This is not the "definitive" list—it will be different from sailor to sailor and, even with each sailor, it will change over time.*

**Table 20.7** Roles "in" and "out" of the boat

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- travel arrangements
  - accommodation
  - information on the venue
  - reading the sailing instructions
  - gathering weather information
  - tidal information (if appropriate)
  - boat set up for the day/race
  - strategy
  - timing the start
  - line bias
  - where to start
  - upwind tactics
  - downwind tactics
  - information regarding other boats
  - when to hoist/drop the chute
  - calling laylines
  - calling crosses
  - roles at mark roundings
  - boat preparation
  - preparing protests
  - signing off
  - goal-setting
  - regatta lifestyle
  - planning (time management, use of diary, when to sail, etc.)
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**Table 20.5** Pre-race routine (last 30 minutes)

Time to go to start	Activity
30 minutes to go:	Sail upwind on the first beat. Split tacks with a partner. Check rig. Find the numbers (compass). Consider first beat tactics. Practise boat-handling. Find the first mark (if laid).
20 minutes to go:	Sail downwind back towards the start-line. Practise boat-handling. Check wave patterns.
15 minutes to go:	Back at start area. Tides (time on distance). Last chat with coach. Food and water.
10 minutes to go:	Transits and line-bias. Check the boat over. Keep an eye on the line. Check the wind.
5 minutes to go:	Set the watch and check at 4 minutes. Think about starting position on the line. Check transits. Bearing for first mark.
1 minute to go:	Line-up. Holding position.
0:	"B" of the bang.

Table 20.2 (Continued)

*Self-evaluation*

	Importance for next training period	Current performance	Best/ideal performance
<i>Mental aspects</i>			
Arousal control—racing —training			
Confidence			
Positive thinking			
Concentration			
Goal-setting			
<i>Race evaluation</i>			
<i>Professional areas</i>			
Boat preparation			
Effective communication (sailor/coach)			
Dealing with outside factors—press —officials —sponsors —outside coaches			
<i>Other areas</i>			
Logistics			
Home affairs			
Finance			

Note: For evaluation below, use the following scoring scheme:  
1 = Very poor/unimportant 10 = Excellent/very important.

**Table 20.2** Olympic 470 performance profile

<i>Self-evaluation</i>			
	Importance for next training period	Current performance	Best/ideal performance
<i>Equipment</i>			
Hull (including fairness, gaskets, etc.)			
Foils			
Mainsail			
Jib			
Spinnaker			
Tuning numbers/settings			
<i>Technique</i>			
Starting			
Acceleration from start			
Mark rounding			
Pressure boat-handling			
Spinnaker hoist			
Tacking			
Gybing—reach to reach —run to run			
Waves upwind—long swell —short chop			
Waves downwind			
Running			
Kinetics			
<i>Strategic / tactical</i>			
Percentage sailing			
Covering			
Boat on boat			
Reaching options			
Running options			
Rules			
Compass/shift work			
Currents/tides			
<i>General skills</i>			
Meteorology			
Great escapes			
Protest technique			
Extreme options (win)			
<i>Target areas</i>			
Weight			
Diet/dehydration			
Event preparation			
Event analysis			
Fitness—targets			

**Table 20.9** An example of segmenting and performance-planning

<i>Segment 1</i> The night before competition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prepare and check equipment</li> <li>2. Relaxation—music, read, TV, etc.</li> <li>3. Review tactics</li> <li>4. Check for sailing instruction amendments</li> <li>5. Go-to-sleep strategy</li> </ol>
<i>Segment 2</i> From waking until departing for the venue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Check the notice board</li> <li>2. Check weather forecast</li> <li>3. Get food and drink organized for the day</li> <li>4. Meet coach and discuss options</li> </ol>
<i>Segment 3</i> From arrival until setting sail	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Arrive at pre-determined time</li> <li>2. Tactical check</li> <li>3. Technical check</li> <li>4. Rig boat</li> <li>5. Get changed</li> <li>6. Relaxation and best performance imagery</li> <li>7. Warm up, stretch, key words</li> <li>8. Set sail</li> </ol>
<i>Segment 4</i> Pre-race routine	
<i>Segment 5</i> Between races	
<i>Segment 6</i> Post-performance	

**Table 20.10** A sailor reminder sheet

<i>My best performances</i>	<i>What was good about them</i>
1. Beating a highly ranked opponent at match racing	1. Aggressive tactics and focused performance
2. Last race at the 420 nationals	2. Brilliant start and good boat-handling
3. Southern areas	3. Stayed confident and focused in spite of setbacks

*Replay these performances in your head as often as possible.*

*My strengths are:*

1. Tactics
2. Fitness
3. Mental toughness

*I need to be:*

1. Positive
2. Focused
3. Well-prepared

*Therefore I need to:*

1. Use positive self-talk
2. Use reminder sheet and process goals
3. Warm up, think through tactics, have a game plan

*Before each race I will:* take a few deep breaths—imagine myself racing well—positive thought—action.

## PHRASE OF THE DAY

Never give up