PREFACE

Passion breeds inspiration in any field of endeavor. When your mind, heart, and soul are devoted to anything important to you, there will always be some degree of overlap between the way you pursue your passion and the way you see the rest of your world. At some point, everyone meets someone who just can't get off their favorite topic in a conversation, or who seems to compare every situation to their greatest passion. It could be the life of a historical figure, or perhaps a favorite film, or it could be a particular sport.

I've been sailing since early childhood, and over time I found that my love of the sport grew to a level at which its presence was just about always felt in the back of my mind. It was eventually instinctive for me to face a scenario on the water and apply it to situations on land. Sailing, or specifically sailboat racing, had opened up new perspectives for me as a youth. It taught me about matters such as teamwork, self-discipline, preparation, focus, assessing risks, setting and pursuing goals, keeping success in perspective, and recovering from defeat. As much internal guidance as my sport provided at first, it was brought into a new light by the time I reached college.

I set out in my freshman year to start a sailing team at Pepperdine University. What I found along the way was that I was setting out on what was essentially my first sailing campaign. The logistical challenges kept piling up: I would need to write bylaws, recruit and train the team members, raise the funds for the fleet, manage the budget, run team meetings and practices, coordinate travel, maintain the equipment inventory, and incidentally, race.

As it turned out, I was basically starting a small business. So when it came time to choose a major, I selected business administration, in part for the skills that I felt I most immediately needed to develop to run the team. This worked to my benefit twofold. I like a good metaphor, and as my sailor's mind absorbed a completely new subject in the classroom, the parallels between sailboat racing and business became apparent to me. My sailing experience drove home classroom lessons on business, and business lessons were aptly applied to my sailing. In the end, pursuing both of these fields together in college reinforced both of them for me.

For about a ten-year span, starting in those university days, I coached various sailing teams and programs. I've had the opportunity to coach sailors from the beginner to the advanced racer, and while the details may matter more the further up the ladder you go, many of the principles for winning a sailboat race bear constant reinforcement at any level. In the process of bringing sailors back to those basic tenets of success, it continually occurred to me how valuable they could be for application in everyday life. The discussion may have been about taking the time to prepare, communicating with your teammate, asserting yourself when it counts, keeping an eye on the competition, adapting to your environment, or playing the odds, just to name a few, but all these topics and more struck a chord as valuable advice in any case.

Subjects such as war and sports are often applied to lessons for success in business or in life. Sailing is a sport that, while global in its reach, is admittedly not at the forefront of the majority of the world's sports fans' minds. Nonetheless, it is a fascinating sport that can provide inspiration to people from all walks of life. What follows is a sailor's perspective on some of the lessons that can be drawn from this complex sport and applied to life's challenges. It will be a tour through a sailor's racing experience, starting with the planning that goes into the quest for victory, passing through the trials and tribulations of the regatta itself, and tying in the learning phases of the aftermath of competition and the buildup to the next goal. In each of these steps, there will be principles that successful sailors apply to their racing that can be duly applied to life off the racecourse as well. There will be situations that crop up that mirror everyday challenges to some degree, and can offer possible solutions as inspired by a racing sailor's methods.

The success principles of sailing herein can be demonstrated in a wide range of situational applications in life as well as historical and present-day contexts. These principles will be explored with comparative application to everyday situations as well as other sports, business, finance, politics, war, and historical events. The lessons that apply to winning in sailing not only apply in many situations on land today, but have proven true over time as well.

Life's challenges take many forms, and it is often easier to put a difficult or unfamiliar situation into perspective by comparing it to a more familiar one. Using the sport of sailing as a setting, the following pages will paint a picture of the cyclical nature of life's challenges and provide some suggestions from the sailor's standpoint as to how to pursue and achieve success and personal growth. It is my hope in assembling this material that the reader may draw inspiration for their own life from the sport that has so often and so profoundly inspired me and my fellow sailors around the world.

PART ONE

THE INSPIRATION OF SAILING

It is not the ship so much as the skilled sailing
that assures the prosperous voyage.

—George William Curtis

Sailing has existed in various forms for thousands of years. The sailing vessels of the ancient world included such different designs as the oared ships that traveled up and down Egypt's Nile River, Chinese junks, and Polynesian canoes that traversed the South Pacific, to name a few. Ancient artifacts uncovered in the Middle East suggest the existence of sailing vessels as early as the fifth millennium BC. With the invention of the sailboat thousands of years ago, new worlds opened up. Not only did a new form of travel emerge, but in time a new form of recreation; sailing wasn't just useful—it also turned out to be fun. Sailboat racing was an inevitable evolution of this once utilitarian discipline. For millennia, sailing ships carried people and goods, for commerce as well as warfare. The sport of sailing as we know it today, however, didn't officially emerge until the seventeenth century in Europe.

The first regatta on record was held on England's River Thames in October of 1661. The race was between two yachts, one belonging to King Charles II, and the other to his brother James, the Duke of York. The course was to be down the river, from Greenwich to Gravesend and back again, the prize being one hundred pounds sterling. The king himself drove his yacht to victory, and the sport of sailing thereafter began to catch on. It would be decades before the common people began to host regattas of their own, but this was the era

in which racing yachts, sailing regattas, and yacht clubs found their origins. By the nineteenth century, America had established its own yachting prowess on a global scale in winning the "100 Guinea Cup" from England's Royal Yacht Squadron (later to be named the America's Cup). The sport of sailing has grown by leaps and bounds over the last few centuries, and continues to be a part of millions of people's lives anywhere that there is water to be raced upon (and even in some places where there isn't, where iceboats and land yachts are employed instead).

This widely beloved sport has been enriching the lives of its participants in numerous ways since its birth. It has brought people together from all walks of life to share a common passion. It has driven passionate and ambitious challenges that have tested people's will and intellect to the highest degree. It has created new industries and careers. And, like so many other sports, it has inspired people to succeed off the water with the lessons inherent in its nature. Organization, teamwork, decision making, discipline, and problem solving are among the valuable life skills that a sailor cannot help but develop, all to their benefit off the racecourse as much as on. This sport has an endless horizon of possibilities ahead of it, and will continue to thrill and inspire people for many generations more. As long as there is wind in the air, there will be sailing. And as long as there is sailing, there will be sailors and sailing enthusiasts to enjoy and learn from it.

A NEW LOOK AT AN OLD SPORT

Sailing is often a misunderstood sport, partially because it usually takes place far away from most observers' eyes. For the average person, various mental images may come up when somebody mentions sailing. One may imagine the tall ships of yesteryear out on the open sea with huge, billowing sails. Or, perhaps an image of an elegant cruising sloop, with brass hardware and teak decks, gliding over the waves off some island paradise. Still another image could be that of high-tech America's Cup yachts jockeying for position before the start of a race.

These are all parts of the sport, to be sure, but the sport of sailing is so vast in scale and diverse in scope, that there is no one-size-fits-all description that will do it justice. There are sailboats of all shapes and sizes, from little dinghies

that could fit inside the bed of a pickup truck to superyachts that overshadow everything on the water short of a military vessel, oil tanker, or cruise liner. There are cruisers who just enjoy being on the water occasionally with friends and family, there are professional racers who compete year-round, traveling the globe from one regatta to the next, and there is a large number of those who are somewhere in the middle.

Much of my own sailing career has been spent racing small boats and various one-designs. I enjoy being on boats and going for the occasional cruise, but by and large I can't seem to be in a boat for very long without starting to think about how to optimize performance. Even if there's nobody to race against, I know that there's a right way and a wrong way to sail a boat, so you might as well do it right. Racing sailboats is a way to take things to the next level; when you've gotten your boat performing well, what better way to keep improving than through competition? Competition in general gives benchmarks for performance, quick and measurable results, and extra opportunities for learning. In this case, the fact that you're on a sailboat just makes it even more fun.

To know what it's like to be a part of this scene, most people would have to drop a lot of assumptions about sailing. Here are some common misconceptions and criticisms sailors have heard over the years:

Myth #1: "Sailing isn't physically challenging."

Sailing's a tough sport, and requires a lot of physical strength and endurance. Some boats are more demanding than others, and at the Olympic or World Championship level, the sailor's physical conditioning counts even more. High-performance boats in particular require aerobic ability, strength throughout the core, legs, and arms, flexibility, and the endurance to keep your concentration up under great strain for an hour-plus long race. In sailing, as in life, being in shape not only keeps the body running strong, but keeps the mind sharp, as well.

Myth #2: "Sailing's just luck—it's the wind, not the sailor's ability, which determines the outcome of the race."

The wind is always changing, and sailors need to watch weather patterns before and during races to see where the next puff of wind or favorable wind shift will come from. We can't force the wind to do what we want, but we

can take advantage of the changes in conditions to make them work in our favor. That's not luck—that's opportunity. An opportunity can be squandered by the sailor who doesn't know how to make it work in his or her favor. When a sailor is well prepared for a race, then they are well suited to handle any eventuality, whether it's potentially positive or negative. As two-time Olympic medalist and America's Cup winner Buddy Melges said, "Sailboat racing becomes a game of chance only when you are not prepared." The methods of successful sailboat racing, like many decisions we face in life, are based largely on anticipation of probable outcomes and smart consideration of risk.

Myth #3: "Sailing's just for the wealthy."

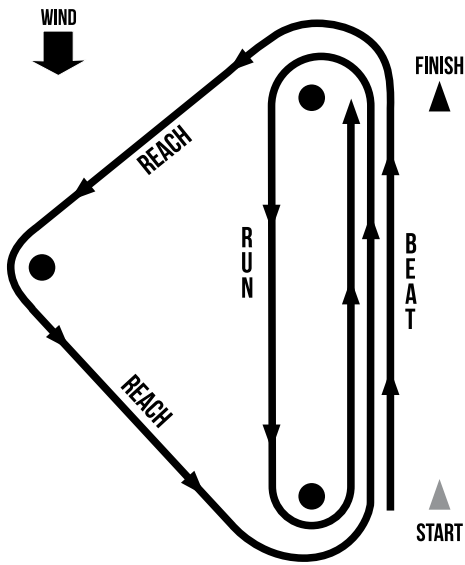
There are sailors from all walks of life, enjoying the sport together the world over. Learning to sail doesn't have to break your bank account. There are many fine sailing academies and clubs throughout the US and around the world that charge very reasonable rates for lessons. More and more schools and universities are offering sailing classes as part of their physical education programs. Many sailors also learn by joining a boat owner's crew and picking up skills along the way. There are boats of all sizes available to fit any budget, and the used boat market is usually full of terrific finds. Anyone with an interest in the sport shouldn't let a limited budget stop them. Just meeting some of the sailors in your area can present opportunities to get onto the water. The right approach for your budget will present itself. Sometimes there are creative ways to meet our goals with the resources we have.

Myth #4: "Winning a sailboat race just depends on who has the fastest boat."

The fastest boat in the world won't help you if you don't know how to get the most out of it. It takes a lot of skill to get a boat around a racecourse, and many times a more talented team has managed to beat a superior boat. That being said, a faster boat does make winning races much easier, assuming the crew makes no mistakes, the boat doesn't capsize or have any equipment breakdowns, and the skipper plays all the wind shifts intelligently. Indeed, the serious competitor should be taking every step to ensure that they have the best equipment going into a contest. Preparation is the key to success in competition on and off the water. As the saying goes, you don't bring a knife to a gunfight.

THE WIDE WORLD OF SAILING

Sailing, in its many forms, can present numerous formats of competition. The largest racing yachts may primarily compete in ocean races, traveling down a coastline, across an ocean, or even around the world. Small one-design boats typically race around courses designed to take about an hour to sail, and generally incorporate multiple laps. Boards and skiffs may use a slalom course to put a premium on maneuvering. Besides the variety of course layouts, sailboat races can vary the contest between the players. There's fleet racing, with large groups of boats racing together; match racing—one-on-one contests running through a bracketed round-robin series; and team racing, with two small groups of boats facing each other for a best combined tally of their individual finishes. Most races have stationary start lines, but some races use rabbit starts, which are begun in motion with the fleet ducking behind a boat on the opposite tack (the "rabbit"). The more sailing a person does, the more likely he or she will get to experience more of these formats, and the more they will broaden their knowledge of the sport. It's common for the top sailors in any given class to have a broad background in the types of sailing they've done in the course of their career.

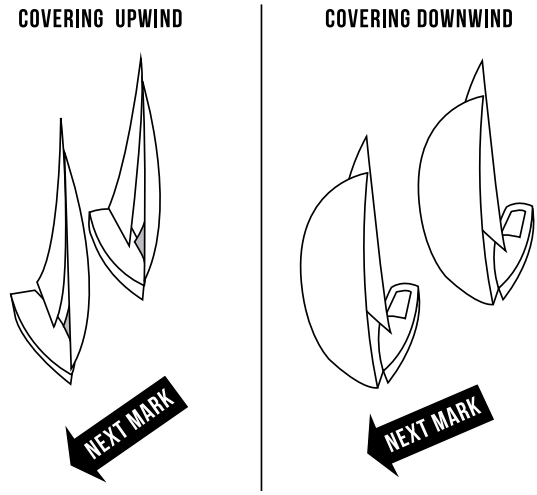


LAYOUT OF AN "OLYMPIC" COURSE

Whatever the format, every sailboat race is designed to challenge the sailor on certain factors. The design, condition, and use of the sailor's equipment will be determining factors in any race, so it is up to the sailor to make sure his boat, sails, and gear are all state of the art and ready to function. The human factor is what makes the sport an ongoing challenge, though. The sailor will need knowledge of the weather and the tides, and their effect on the course; an understanding of the racing rules and how to incorporate shrewd racing tactics within their boundaries; methods of tuning and driving his boat for optimal speed; and a natural, instinctive feel for the motion of the boat to enhance his reaction time. Some boats are primarily a challenge of strength, and some are a challenge of smarts, but all boats reward a healthy dose of both.

Competitive fleets can be tough to navigate during a race, and there is some potential for collisions if everyone isn't on their toes. Any time two or more boats come into close quarters on the racecourse, the right-of-way rules come into play. For some events, there are umpires following in motorboats to judge any rules infractions on the water, but most of the time, sailing is a self-policing sport. Fouls can usually be absolved by some means, such as penalty turns or a temporary stop. If the two boats disagree on who was at fault, however, they can protest and discuss the matter on shore after the race with an impartial jury. It's a bit like a court of law, with each side presenting a case, calling witnesses, and questioning each other. Since protests slow down the ultimate result and put both parties at risk for disqualification, most sailors do what they can to avoid protests. Protests, like lawsuits, can wind up costing you more than you gain, even when you win.

Risk is an ever-present factor in the tactics of sailing. For most decisions that offer a reward, there is a risk that accompanies it. A skipper may want to call for a lighter and larger spinnaker for more speed, but must consider that a sudden unexpected puff could tear it to shreds, costing him much more speed, not to mention money. He may want to sail a higher course on an off-wind leg that will offer more speed, but sacrifice position and distance to the next mark. He may believe that one side of the course is favored, but finds that he'll have to split from the rest of the fleet to get there. Boats in the lead will generally seek to position themselves between their competition and the next mark of the course. If the opposition should split off in different directions, the leader



will need to determine how to respond. Trailing boats also face decisions that balance risk and reward. If a skipper of a boat that's behind decides to blanket the wind of his nearest opponent on an off-wind leg, he'll need to remember the defensive tactics that may be used against him in response. Engaging with the leader can start a battle that is more costly than it's worth, so some forethought is required before making his move. In the ongoing push for better results, it takes some mental discipline to recognize the risks that accompany the sought-after reward, to create a plan suitable to the situation, and to act on that plan decisively.

While anyone looking for success on or off the water will seek out high reward for low risk, there's generally no way to eliminate risk entirely. Preparation can address the factors that you can control, or at least address, but there will often be something waiting to challenge even the most thoroughly prepared. When you look at the big picture, sailing around a racecourse includes a lot of potential obstacles and snafus that can slow you down:

- Opposing currents
- Big waves
- Kelp patches
- Other racing boats
- Chop from passing motorboats
- Spots of windless holes

- Crew mistakes
- Equipment failures
- Missed wind shifts
- Late or slow start
- Marine life

Every sailor goes around the course with the ambition to sail the course perfectly. As it turns out, none of them will. There are too many factors happening all at once for a human being or a team of human beings to avoid any slowing effects whatsoever. The boat that wins the race is the one that made the fewest mistakes, or avoided any major obstacles that may have slowed down the other boats. Nobody can do it perfectly; they can just do it the best they can and make sure it's a little better than the other guy.

It's taken hundreds of years for this sport to evolve to its current state, and it continues to branch out into new formats and variations, each advance in technique or technology making it more inclusive to newcomers and all the more interesting for the experts. Sailing's challenging nature provides benefits beyond the sport itself; it provides the opportunity to bring out the best in people. It introduces people to those with whom they'll compete and those with whom they'll cooperate. It teaches people to accept some degree of uncertainty, but it also teaches how to reduce the chance of nasty surprises. It demonstrates not only the importance of the little details that make a difference, but also the importance of understanding the bigger picture. It rewards thorough advance preparation as well as smart adaptation when the game changes. It can also reward daring ambition as fast as it punishes greed. It is a sport that will not gladly suffer fools or cheats, and it both demands and rewards persistence, creativity, reason, and patience. In short, sailing can be a lot like life.

THE ELEMENTS OF ACHIEVEMENT

There are three big-picture elements of achievement that will be covered as we move ahead, encompassing many elements of sailboat racing as the basis for valuable takeaways that can apply in the way we live our lives in other ways. These elements, the three stages of an ongoing process to grow and achieve, are Planning, Performing, and Learning. A successful result for any important effort depends greatly on these three elements, each as necessary as the others.

They act as a cycle over the long run; we make a plan for success, take action to accomplish our goals, and then use the experience to learn and build a foundation for the future as we begin making new plans for success. The cycle can end when we stop making an effort to succeed (but why do that?), or it can speed up with each new effort and each learning experience.

Planning involves setting goals, allocating resources, preparation and practice, surveying the field, building a team, and preparing body and mind. Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War* that the victors of any battle win first and then go to war, while the defeated go to war first and then seek to win. This lesson has held true over time, as the outcome of any contest is generally determined well in advance as a reflection of the superior planning of the eventual winner. When the time for the competition arrives, the time for plans is past—now it's time to perform.

Performing at a higher level means execution of the success you've visualized for yourself. It can also mean building up your standards of success through competition, either with others or against yourself. Of course, you can't win them all, and there are always opportunities to improve. That's why learning, both through competition and as an ongoing personal habit, is so valuable.

Learning involves an honest evaluation of performance and an optimistic outlook. After all, learning is just the first step in planning for the next time. You make your plans, perform your best, learn what you can, and set plans again. Growth from any challenge depends not only on what is learned from the experience, but on how you go about gathering new knowledge in order to improve in your future efforts. Life just keeps presenting new challenges for us, whether it's in sports, career, academics, or anything else.

This cycle of achievement can be represented visually as a training course, not unlike one commonly used by a novice sailor to practice boat handling. The drill is simple, consisting of laps around a course of three buoys, allowing him to practice steering and sail trim through each leg of the course. It may be an awkward process at first to go through the whole circuit, but with every lap the sailor completes, he performs better and better. Such is the cycle of achievement off the water. Imagine that each leg of the course represents one of the three achievement principles of planning, performing, and learning, in that order. Each leg leads into the next, in a cycle that repeats, and is completed each time more proficiently. Your planning dictates your performance, which in turn will provide opportunities for learning, which will influence your methods of planning for the next contest. The more you go through this cycle, the smoother your "sailing" will become, and the higher your ultimate achievement will be.