

Tuning your asymmetric

Rob Wilson takes time out from the Belgian Formula 18 Nationals to look at asymmetric spinnaker tuning. Fine tuning of your asymmetric ensure that you get the most out of downwind legs on the course. With a well-designed spinnaker tuned well, there is no reason why you can't be one of the fastest boats on the water.

The critical points to getting the best out of your **asymmetric** are the **sheeting position, luff length, luff line** and **leech line**.

Luff length

This is the distance measured between the block at the top of the mast and the end of the pole. To measure this, run a tape measure up the mast on the spinnaker halyard and push the pole up to take out any slack in the system. Once a fast

setting is found this can be recorded so that it can be reproduced in the future. In the Formula 18 we set the luff length to an all-round position for 9 knots plus, then all we have to do in very light winds is the ease the halyard approximately 4 inches to

soften the luff. In very strong winds the all-round position still works well because the apparent wind moves aft slightly, so the luff does not have to go any tighter. This allows the spinnaker to project forward, keeping the bows out of the water.

Luff too tight

The symptoms of the luff being too tight are a very tight straight line down the front edge of the spinnaker, as in the photo. The spinnaker will become hard to trim and it will feel as though you have to pull the sheet very hard to keep it flying. Try easing the halyard about three to four inches.

Luff too eased

If the pole height is too high, or the spinnaker halyard is too eased then the luff will sag off to leeward. In this case the spinnaker will be quite easy to trim but you will lose speed as the spinnaker is pulling more sideways rather than forward. To solve, make sure the halyard is tight. If the halyard is already tight you will have to go to the shore and lower the pole.

Luff just right

With the luff tension trimmed correctly, the spinnaker should be easy to trim, projecting nicely and not sagging off to leeward.

Photos: Rob Wilson

