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## TECHNIQUE

By Joan Gilmore

# Catamaran MOB

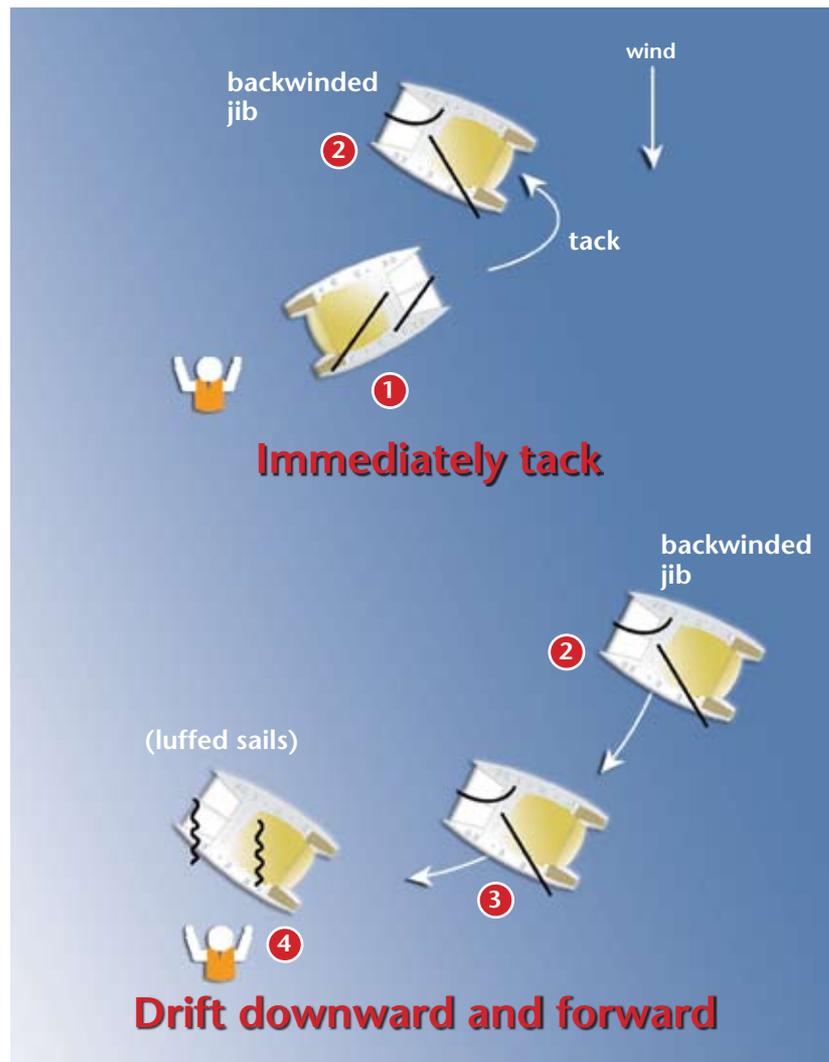
Recovering a MOB on a large cat requires a new method

Catamarans are becoming bigger, both in popularity and in size. While fun to sail and immensely comfortable, the wide beams of big cats can make sailing them unwieldy, and retrieving a crew overboard can be difficult.

Chartering a brand new Moorings 4300 for an American Sailing Association cruising catamaran course, we had a devil of a time with MOB maneuvers on the big cat. Neither the traditional figure eight nor the quick-stop method worked well. We ended up nailing it every time, however, with a modified figure eight with backwinded jib. Similar to the jibe to hove-to maneuver, this method even worked on a day with variable winds of 7 to 18 knots. Having never before performed this maneuver aboard a big catamaran, we quickly dubbed it the Ryal Return in honor of student Andrew Ryal, who first performed it.

The Ryal Return worked whether the approach was close, beam or broad—though safest, of course, with a close reach. Having the jib backwinded allowed this method to be a singlehanded maneuver, and kept the approach to the victim slow, no matter what type of reach we were on. This method also kept us within one and a half boatlengths of the victim at all times.

Begin by tacking the boat after sailing one boatlength away from the victim on a beam reach. Since you are on a large cat you will be sailing no better than 60 degrees to the wind, so you will likely be on a beam reach to begin with. If you are on a broad reach, just head up slightly before tacking. Do not move the jib during the tack. You



are now in a hove-to position, with your beam to the wind. You are slowly slipping downwind. Use the steering to move upwind if the victim is ahead of you, or downwind if the victim is still below you. Since jibs are relatively small on big cats, your jib will not spin your bow down completely and you will still be able to steer either upwind or downwind as needed.

Slip downwind toward the victim until you are slightly downwind of being directly abeam of the person. Now head up slightly so that you are approaching the victim from windward while you are on a close reach (about 60 to 80 degrees off the wind). Once you are next to the victim, luff both sails. Pick up the victim on the leeward side of the boat. Make sure the person performing

the pickup stays well aft of the jib blocks since jib sheets tend to flog once they are released. Picking up from the side of the cockpit is safest, and overboard crew can be easily walked back to the swim step for boarding.

We found that picking up the MOB on the leeward side of the boat is better because waves generated by the amas tend to push the victim out of reach away from the boat when attempting to pick up on the windward side.

The Ryal Return method slows the boat down to the point that boat speed is minimal when picking up, but steerage way is still maintained. This method works best after your crew has practiced both heaving to and maneuvering while in a hove-to position.