

by Pete Fenner

Well over half the competitors at the 1987 Snipe Worlds in La Rochelle, France, sported pole launchers. While the types and schemes varied in detail, all had the same basic idea in common.

Everyone I saw, except Birger Jansen of Norway, used the "lazy launch line" jib attachment. For me this is the idea which makes carrying the pole on the boom worthwhile.

A line is tied to the jib clew (where the sheets attach) and runs up into the front end of the pole. This same line runs all the way through the pole, exits out of the rear end, and then runs forward, along the boom, to a pulley on the mast, near the gooseneck.

To launch the pole, you pull this line. The jib clew is then pulled to the end of the pole and then the pole is "pulled out" until the aft end is near the mast. The pole is up, like magic! No rooco hassels with the crew trying to snap the pole end on the clew!

Taking the pole down is even easier. Just unclerk the line and let go. The shock cord holding the back of the pole pulls it back to the boom. Be careful that the pole doesn't get tangled in the vang or hit you. Pulling the main in a little before retract-

ing will help.

To jibe you let the pole retract about two-thirds before swinging the boom over. The pole will automatically switch sides. Then you pull on the line and the pole goes back out.

This magic is all accomplished by the shock cord that holds the pole onto the boom. Designs vary a bit, but the basic idea is a 5/16" shock cord attached to the aft end of the pole. This cord passes through a pulley on the aft end of the boom. It holds the pole to the boom and is tensioned when the pole moves forward during launching. When you release the launch line, the shock cord tension automatically retracts the pole. The shock cord must be at least the length of the boom, if not longer.

Torbin Graet, 1987 World Champion, gets two boom lengths by mounting a pulley inside the boom near the mast. The shock cord, tied to the aft end of the pole, passes through the boom, forward to the pulley and then back to the aft end of the boom, where it is tied off.

Some systems at the Worlds used only one boom length of cord, while one had five, along with the necessary multiple pulleys! Two or three lengths seems adequate to me.

When retracted, the pole is held in place by a guide ring mounted on the forward end of the boom, near the gooseneck, and a length of lighter (1/4") shock cord. This ring serves as a guide when the pole is launched or retracted. On the simplest rigs, the single 5/16" shock cord holds both the aft end of the pole and the guide ring. Torbin's two-part system uses a separate shock cord for the guide ring. His ring is a short (about 2") plastic tube. His guide ring shock cord is about 1/8" and runs through the sail's tack grommet aft to the outboard shackle. This method seems to work quite well.

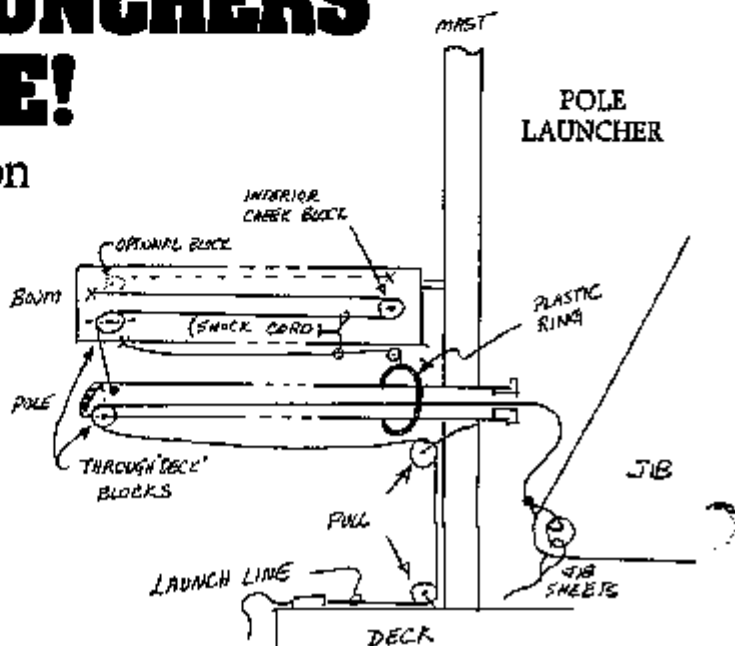
Pole sizes ranged between Torbin's 7/8" OD tube of 102" (259cm) in length up to 1 1/2" OD poles of 106" (270cm) length. All poles were aluminum.

The new SCIRA rule, adopted at La Rochelle, limits pole length to 104" (264cm). I asked Torbin if 7/8" OD wasn't a little light. He smiled and said, "sometimes." I believe 1" or 1 1/4" OD tubing is less likely to bend in the heavy going. It should be noted that the heavier poles have a tendency to pull the leach of the main lighter in light air.

All poles had a plastic grommet in the forward (jib) end to keep the launch line from chafing on the edge of the tube. The

# POLE LAUNCHERS ARE HERE!

Carrying the pole on the boom is easy. Here's how...



aft end of the pole has either a grommet or a small pulley to reduce the launch line friction. Torbin's pole had the aluminum end cut and flaired so the pulley sheave mounted directly to the tubing with a small bolt. It was a slick design!

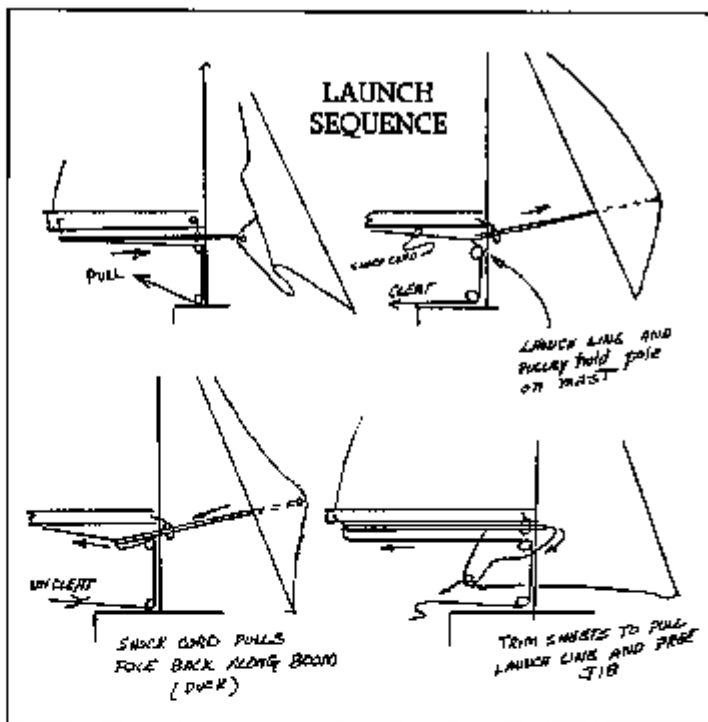
To summarize: A 102" to 104" aluminum tube is held on the boom by a shock cord at the back and a plastic guide ring at the front.

The launch line goes from a cleat and pulley on the deck up to a pulley at the gooseneck. From there the line goes back along the boom, outside the pole, to the aft end of the pole. There the line enters the pole, runs the length of the pole (inside the pole), exits through the front of the pole and ties to the jib clew.

The shock cord holding the pole runs two or three times the boom's length over ball-bearing pulleys, usually mounted inside the boom.

I have built one myself. My wife loves it and that alone makes it worth the effort!

By the way, at the Worlds boats with this system with the pole permanently attached were given a three pound (1.3 KG) penalty when weighed. That means the boat had to weigh in at 384 pounds or more. This compensates for the fact that the 381 pound weight does not normally include the whisker pole.



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