

Equipment for Opti Sailing

SAFETY

Life Jackets - The kids like the slimmer PDF's but they must be US Coast Guard approved Type III. Note some of the slimmer PDFs from Gill or Zhik look cool but DO NOT MEET US Coast Guard Type III that is required for USODA sanctioned events. It's nice if they have a small pocket for gloves, chap stick and zinc. Brands other kids are wearing are: Extrasport, Stolquist, etc. More are available online than locally available. **Whistle** – required for all USODA events. It's worth getting a few back ups for the sail bag. You need a lanyard to tie it to the PDF.

BOATS

Our program encourages boat ownership. SFYC boats are available while your child is getting used to the program. There are usually quite a few good used boats available from kids that have aged out of Optis. There are also some great deals after big USODA events like Orange Bowl when boats come off charter. The biggest brands are: **McLaughlin** (US made), **Winner** (Danish made) and **Lange** (Argentina). The same rigging works in any of these hulls. There are standard USODA requirements for hull weight, blade, spar and sail size so it's best to get your equipment from someone who has sailed competitively or from a reputable dealer.

SPARS

Spars - The basic Opti package often comes with silver spars. Fairly quickly your sailor should move to the competitive Black & Gold spars.

Extra boom - Great for your practice sail. Switching from practice sail to race sail (used only for events to avoid unnecessary early wear) is a breeze as you don't have to re-tie sail ties!

Spar bag- You will need a travel bag to protect your spars and your sail. To give this bag rigid protection you should take this bag to the hardware store or landscape drainage supplies equipment store and buy a 10' long piece of 4" diameter **PVC THIN WALL (NOT SCHEDULE 40!) piping** without the perforation holes that will fit into the sleeve. You can ask the hardware store to cut the piping to 77 inches (Check McLaughlin's FAQ for this dimension) for you. Ideally try to ease the sharp edge of the ends with a file so that the sharp edge will not quickly cut through the cloth of your spar bag. Your sailor will roll the sail on the boom and place this in the PVC sleeve for protection.

BLADES

Tiller & Centerboard – must conform to USODA size restrictions that were put in place about 2 years ago. Some of the older centerboards are extra long and can't be used for USODA events. Best brands are N1 or TEB. However the generic ones are fine. Consider how much nice blades cost and how well a younger green fletcher will treat them before shelling out the big bucks. Consider used or standard for new / younger sailors.

Blade bags – Different brands are Colie, Magic Marine (slightly cheaper), Sail Intensity and Optiparts.

BOAT COVERS

Bottom Cover – the bottom cover offers basic protection. It should have padding and be easy to remove. Some people have complained about their Magic Marine covers. The Colie Sail cover is very durable and easy to remove. Other brands are Optiparts You must have your sailors name clearly visible on the transom of your boat and cover so that we can identify you on the sail racks and the trailer. You can have your name screened onto some covers like the Colie cover. (McLaughlin will gladly paint your name on the transom readable when hull is flipped bottom facing up on an Optiparts cover)

Top Cover- This is really nice to have as it protects your boat when it's on the trailer. You don't have to secure your mainsheet or bailers if you have a top cover.

SAILS

Racing sail – Some kids have a racing sail as well as a practice sail. At the more competitive level you may have a light wind sail and a heavy wind sail. Improving performance usually depends more on improving sailing ability than on perfect equipment. Some families let their sailor earn a new sail by meeting certain performance and commitment criteria. There's a lot of technical information on the sail choices, with the biggest factors being sailor's weight and ability. Coach Nikko or some of the Opti parents would be glad to give advice.

Sail numbers- The sail numbers should match the hull number. There is a very particular way that they need to be laid out. You can consult the USODA website for this information. If you buy a new sail, have the supplier put the numbers on for you (generally free with the purchase of a new sail.) Sail number color: red is great for the beginners, as parents can pick out their sailor when viewing from offshore. For more advanced racers, red is usually avoided because your sailor is easier to identify if over the starting line early!

OTHER BOAT GEAR – ALWAYS LABEL EVERYTHING

Main Sheet – Tapered mainsheets are easier to pull in.

Bailers – You will need 2 large bailers with stretchy tie lines. These wear out or get lost so it's a good idea to have back up.

Wind indicator – These insert into the top of the mast. They're often lost so you should label them and have back up.

Mast ties – the thinner black ties hold the knot better. Buy a spool of the 1.5 MM spectra type line from an Opti dealer and save money. Get a spool of the larger size diameter for corner ties.

Tell tales- You should ask your coach where to put them on the sail.

Mast Clamp – This is VERY important to have. It locks your mast in place so that if you flip over you don't lose your mast or damage the mast collar. The best \$40 you will ever spend (damage caused by mast slipping out of its cup is \$500 plus and the boat will have lost a ton in value due to this type of damage.)

Bow line – This is a mandatory safety requirement so that your sailor can be safely towed. It MUST BE FREE OF KNOTS to avoid problems with towing hook-ups in heavy wind! It should be line that floats and is designed to tow Opti's. Again Opti dealers have them.

Hiking strap systems - The latest have “grippy” rubber on the underside. Zhik is the innovator brand. However, Sail Intensity has a great copy of the Zhik type and much more affordable. Grippy topped boots really allow a sailor to “lock in” and become one with the hull when hiking.

Main sheet block - The more expensive the block the better it performs. Unfortunately for younger sailors (beginners) they need all the help they can get with “holding” the sail fully trimmed in. Check with opti parents or the more advanced racers to get opinions on what brand is preferred for an upgrade.

CLOTHING

The bay is cold even when it may be hot on the dock. Your child will NOT be learning much if they're too cold. Having the proper gear can prevent hypothermia. Stay away from cotton.

Spray gear – The spray jacket and farmer john spray pants need to be wind and waterproof. Gull and Gill 5 dot are 2 good brands that are available in Youth sizes. They should be roomy enough to be worn over a wet suit. Bigger is not a problem and will allow for some room to grow.

Wet suits – There are different thicknesses to choose from. This is a good layer for fall and winter sailing in the bay. Most kids protect their wet suits by wearing board shorts over top.

Hiking pants or hiking pads – these provide rigged support so the boat doesn't hurt the back of the thighs. Some kids prefer to wear hiking pants rather than wet suits. I have not found Youth sizes in hiking pants, but Gill has adult XS. Zhik brand makes the pads that attach to your legs with a neoprene sleeve which the sailor steps into each.

Dry Suits – These are very expensive, but they make a huge difference to kids who get cold easily. They are fully sealed to keep the water out. You wear fleece layers underneath to keep warm. Only drawback is you can't pee in them (or they're no longer a dry suit) Look for ones with pee holes in front and a rear drop style panel for girls.

Sailing boots – these are a combination of neoprene and rubber soles to keep the feet warm. If it's really cold you can add Smart Wool socks. They all stink! They should always be rinsed off and dried if possible. We keep ours in the garage with dryer sheets in them to mask the smell. There is an enzyme based cleaner which eliminates the odor build up typically found at surf shops and some sailing equipment stores.

Rash Guards & thermal layers – These come in different thicknesses for different weather. SFYC offers a team rash guard by Gill that only the race team kids can buy. Zhik also has some warm fleece lined rash guards and bottom layers for colder weather. Again, ask the older sailors what performs for them, and why they like the features of the brands they use.

Beanie and gloves – There are many options from Gill, Zhik and all the major brands. The important thing is to wear them. We have a collection of half pairs of gloves – it's a good idea to label them. Phone numbers in Sharpie on everything will save you \$.

Sunglasses – The reflection from the sails and the water is very damaging to the eyes so glasses that protect from UV rays is important. There are *floating* sunglasses available from Gill and Peepers (available at REI).

TOOL KIT

As sailors take more responsibility for rigging and adjusting their boats a tool kit is helpful. This should contain: Tape measure with a hook end for measuring mast rake, sail tape and duct tape for repairs, spare mast collar, sharpie marker, spare sail ties and line, lighter for fusing the ends of the ties and a multi tool. Again, ask some of the McGiver Opti Dads what neat-O tools and widgets they like!

BAY AREA SUPPLIERS:

Svendsen's Marine: (510) 521-8454 SFYC Youth Sailing supporter
www.svendsensmarine.com

WEST COAST SUPPLIERS:

West Coast Sailing – 888-884-5536 SFYC Youth Sailing supporter
<http://www.westcoastsailing.net> free online shipping
Sailing Pro Shop – 800-354-7245
<http://www.sailingproshop.com>

NATIONAL SUPPLIERS:

Colie Sail
<http://www.coliesail.com>
Intensity Sails SFYC Youth Sailing supporter
www.intensitysails.com
McLaughlin Optimists SFYC Youth Sailing supporter
<http://www.optistuff.com>
North Sails SFYC Youth Sailing supporter
www.northsails.com