

PERFECT MARK ROUNDINGS

Mark roundings are one of the few places where the fleet gets pushed together and here there are plenty of opportunities to make big gains or big losses. Indeed a crucial mark rounding can make or break your race. Therefore it makes a lot of sense to practise mark rounding when you have the opportunity, which is why many training sessions will involve a lot of short course racing.

The definition of a good mark rounding is to round the mark as quickly as possible whilst coming out at maximum velocity made good (VMG) on the new course. Simply there is no point turning quickly and stopping (perhaps because the sail is completely flapping or massively over sheeted) or coming out at great speed having sailed a lot of extra distance.

Firstly, let's look at a leeward mark rounding. This is often coming from a run to a beat and so will involve moving a large amount of sheet. You need to do large arm movements to get the sheet in quickly enough. Try and get the sheet in the cockpit area to avoid tangles.

To facilitate the turn, a little leeward heel helps the boat head up. You can then bring the boat flat when it is on its desired course (after rounding the mark). The lighter the winds the more leeward heel is required, whilst strong winds require less. You want to pass the mark as close as possible, so do be careful that you don't hit the mark with your body as you pass it.

Step by step rounding:

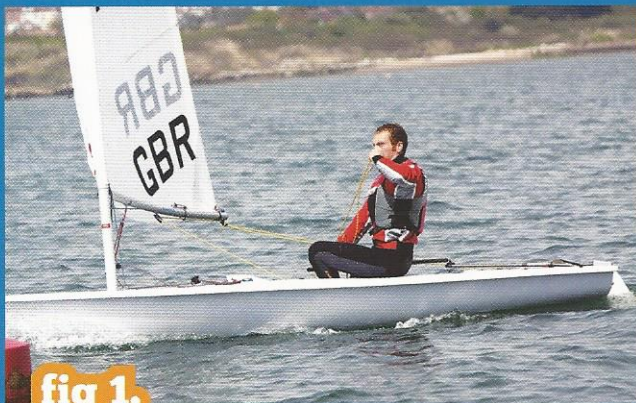


fig 1.

Keeping the boat flat and at full speed as you approach the mark, leave sheeting in and turning until the last possible moment.



fig 2.

Now as the bow reaches the mark, start to sheet in rapidly as you turn, ensuring that the sail is not over or under sheeted so you maintain maximum boat speed.



fig 3.

Move your bodyweight as required to create a small angle of heel (move your body out if the boat is heeling too much, move it in if there is not enough heel) and continue to sheet in.



fig 4.

As you round the mark on a close hauled course the sail should now be correctly sheeted (now you can bring the boat flat and make any small sail control adjustments which are required).

Now let us consider the windward mark rounding.

If possible you want to have a small gap between yourself and the mark making it easy to make the turn and giving you room for error if there is a slight header (you can still make it round the mark). Try and get the sail controls adjusted before the windward mark to make the turn easier. Adjusting the centreboard is not always necessary (only do it if you have plenty of time). Once again use your body movement to minimise the amount of rudder required.

Step by step rounding:

**fig 5.**

Approach the windward mark allowing space to do a good turn, if possible adjust the sail controls before rounding the mark (notice the slack kicker).

**fig 6.**

Ease the sheet and allow the boat to heel to windward to start the turn.

**fig 7.**

Continue to ease the sheet as you turn the boat and move your weight out and back so as to make the turn using a minimum amount of rudder movement.

**fig 8.**

Allow the boat to pass the mark and then move your bodyweight forward and in and raise the centreboard. Do not move your body until the boat is on the desired new course.

Finally we can look at the gybe mark. Here we are wanting to turn the boat tightly around the mark using your bodyweight as much as possible to make the boat turn, and then once again bring the boat flat when it is on its new course. The key is to roll the boat at the right time and then move quickly across the boat keeping the sail full for as long as possible. In strong winds be careful not to allow the boom to hit the water as this could lead to a capsized.

Step by step rounding:

**fig 9.**

A small amount of windward heel as you approach the mark to start the turn.

**fig 10.**

Now a huge roll to windward (depending upon the wind strength) to drive the turn when you are beside the mark.

**fig 11.**

Move across the boat at the same time that the sail comes across. The heel of the boat will continue to allow the boat to turn.

**fig 12.**

Hike out as the sail fills and the boat reaches its new course.

**fig 13.**

and then as you pass the mark bring the boat completely flat to accelerate away.