



Winging the jib to windward
on a run

RESCUING A MAN OVERBOARD

Man overboard is a serious situation on all boats. Consequently, the best method for returning to someone who has fallen in the water is one of the most hotly debated subjects in sailing. Of the three popular basic methods, we feel that the following is the most efficient method of rescue and includes some safeguards which make it preferable for new sailors. Others may choose alternate methods, but the objective for everyone is the same—safe, efficient, and reliable recovery of someone who has fallen overboard.

The following method involves sailing a figure eight course with one tack and no

jibe. It places the rescuing vessel on a close reach approaching the victim. You will remember from Part Two that a sailboat is easiest to stop with control on a close reach; that's why the following method is recommended for beginners. Crews should practice it many times in all types of weather.

THE FIGURE EIGHT METHOD

1. As soon as the person falls overboard;
 - a) Someone must shout "Man overboard!"
 - b) The nearest person must throw a PFD, life jacket, life ring or any other large, buoyant object to the person in the water.
 - c) Another person must be assigned to

watch the person in the water. This spotter points to the victim and gives verbal directions to the helmsman as to where the man overboard is. The spotter must never take his eyes off the person in the water.

2. The helmsman immediately steers to a beam reach from whatever point of sail the boat has been sailing.

3. The crew prepares a heaving line, boarding ladder, blankets, and jackets.

4. After sailing long enough for the crew to get prepared (about 100 yards), the helmsman commands the crew to prepare to come about.

5. As the boat comes about, the crew trims the mainsail but not the jib. This slows the boat's speed. Not having to tend the jib also frees up one member of the crew to assist the spotter or prepare to rescue the man overboard. The loop formed by the jib sheet in the water also gives the man overboard something to grasp as the boat comes near.

6. The spotter continues to give verbal and visual directions to the helmsman.

7. The helmsman, before getting too close to the victim, will have to test to see if the boat is actually on a close reach by hav-

ing the crew luff the mainsail. If the mainsail luffs fully, the boat is on a close reach and the helmsman and crew carry on as if this were a stopping exercise. The helmsman stops the boat a few feet to windward of the victim. (The helmsman can also look to see that the masthead fly is pointing 40 to 50 degrees off the bow. This too indicates a close reach, but requires the helmsman to take his eyes off the spotter or the person in the water.)

8. As soon as the boat is stopped to windward of the victim, a line should be thrown and the individual secured to the vessel.

9. Once the person is alongside, the crew must bring him aboard. If he is unconscious or exhausted, he will not be able to help himself, so all crew members will have to haul him up by the armpits. Alternatively, a line may be led under his armpits and pulled up with a halyard. However, if the swimmer is self-sufficient, the crew should lower the boat's swimming ladder (if there is one). Obviously, the boat must be at a dead stop,

10. After the victim is aboard, treat him or her for hypothermia.

Picking up a man overboard

