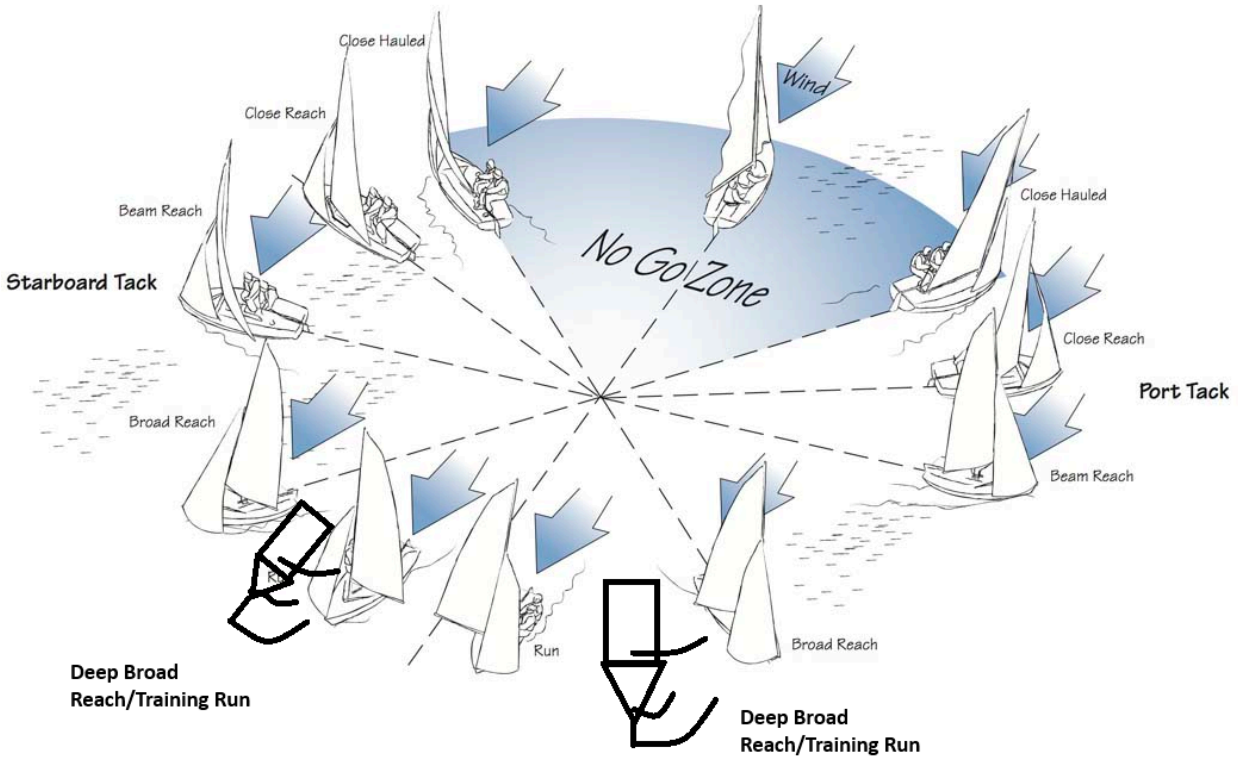
Tips for using the Asymmetric Spinnaker

Sailing with a spinnaker is super fun and fast. Renton Sailing is one of the few Community Sailing Centers that has spinnakers. We all have to understand how to set, jibe and most importantly douse the kite. Not doing it correctly will destroy an expensive $750 sail. If anything here sounds like a foreign language please leave the spinnaker alone until you get a chance to sail with a member who can coach you on getting it up, around and down.

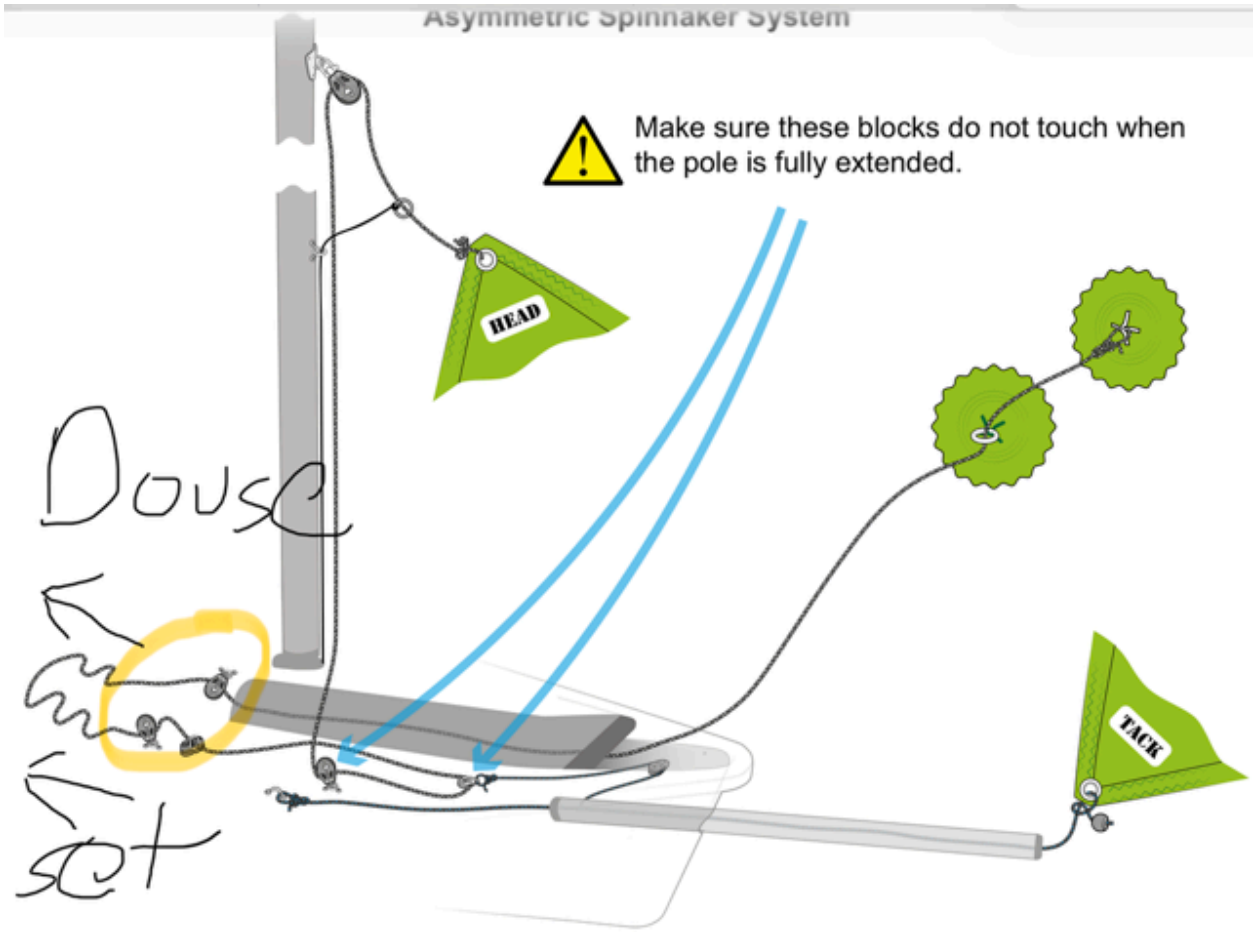
Rule 1: Always **set and douse on a deep broad reach,** not quite a run but close.



This takes the breeze out of the spinnaker by “blanketing” it to leeward of the mainsail while setting and dousing allowing it to easily go up and come down. This is a good way to keep the spinnaker out of the lake and reduce drama onboard. In a race, plan your approach to the leeward mark so you can douse on a deep broad reach. Sometimes aiming just to windward to the leeward mark when you are fetching, to allow you to bear away for the douse.

Just before dousing take any slack out of the dousing line. Otherwise when you take the halyard out of the cleat the spinnaker will just go under the boat which is slow and will also rip the spinnaker.

Always trim the halyard and dousing line from aft of the turning block. It's there to help you out!



When dousing, if something hangs up, stop pulling on the dousing line. Check the halyard cleat, the halyard probably just re-cleated itself. If that's not it, look around for the problem and clear it. Don't just keep pulling. The driver will need to keep sailing on a deep broad reach till the problem is sorted out. Even if it means you over stand the leeward mark in a race. Always leave plenty of room to leeward to allow extra time and space to douse in case you have an issue. Never use the kite within the log boom area, there is not enough room. You can move the halyard to port/starboard of the cleat which will help prevent it from re-cleating however, it adds a little friction to the douse.

When setting and dousing, wear sailing gloves and go "hand over fist" pulling full arm lengths. The kite needs to come up quick before it fills and needs to come down quickly before it falls in the water. You'll need to trim about 25 feet of rope in a couple of seconds!

During the jibe, master the "Late Main Jibe" where the driver bears away to a deep broad reach as the trimmer eases the working sheet, then quickly pull the kite around to the new leeward side. This is followed by the driver finishing the jibe and controlling the main across. This Video

illustrates this: https://youtu.be/dbo4OBcbap8?is=pjpbnc_tMTgShlTL You'll need to quickly be able to trim about 12 feet of spinnaker sheet. Master this and you might not wrap the spinnaker.

Let's remember that the asymmetric spinnaker is an off the wind sail. In lighter breeze you may be able to come up to a close reach. **Never try to tack with the kite up, always jibe**.

To furl or not to furl?: If there is enough breeze to get flow over all three sails, usually 7+ knots then there is no reason to furl the jib. The crew can just move the jib across after getting the spinnaker across during the jibe. If you can't get flow over the spinnaker with the jib unfurled in light breeze it's best to furl the jib after you have set. This keeps the spinnaker halyard out of the jib furl and helps blanked the spinnaker leeward of the main and jib when setting. If you furl be sure to unfurl before the douse. This helps depower the kite to leeward of the jib and main and also reduces the chance of the spinnaker halyard getting fouled in the furl.

This video is fantastic as it shows how to set, jibe and douse an asymmetrical design on a similar design to our Quest. https://youtu.be/Cg1EwlQpH5o?is=9esd0bL0c8k0Y8HT

Chapter 9 of the Quest Rigging guide is super helpful so you understand the rigging of the Quest asymmetrical spinnaker.
https://www.rssailing.com/wp-content/uploads/guides/RS_QUEST_RIGGING_MANUAL.pdf

Thanks for reading this far. Have fun out there and if any of this doesn't make sense please ask one of our advanced members for some coaching.