



OSTS Notes



Newsletter of the United States Naval Academy
Offshore Sail Training Squadron

DIRECTOR'S CUT

by Renee Mehl



We hope all of our OSTS midshipmen, volunteers, and supporters are staying healthy and safe during this world-wide crisis. Maryland residents are under a state emergency directive requiring all non-essential personnel to stay at home until the end of April. Virginia residents are directed to stay at home until June

10th, and almost all other states have restrictions now. All of our non-essential Academy faculty and staff are teleworking (including the sailing department) to support the Brigade of Midshipmen. We are working through Zoom and Google hangouts, as well as email and phone if you need to get in touch with us.

Many thanks to everyone who is working in the essential category in the military, healthcare and supporting businesses.

This newsletter is intended as an update for you regarding our program plans for the short and medium-range time frame.

April-May

- All spring on-water training is suspended.
- First Aid and CPR/AED training is suspended.
- Block 0 training is cancelled (time period between end of finals early May to Commissioning)
- All midshipmen have been directed to remain in their current locations by the Superintendent until further notice. They will finish coursework for the semester through remote/virtual instruction. VADM Buck's goal is to graduate and commission the Class of 2020 on time.

The Academy Senior Leadership Team continues to assess the situation. We are providing input, with several possible courses of action (or COAs) to help in their decision-making process regarding all of our summer sail training programs.

June-August

It is highly unlikely that we will proceed as normal with our full blocks of training to remote ports, but that is one of the options. A more likely COA we are working on is a shortened, two-week block of training, which would proceed if we can reduce the medical Risk Assessment Code to an acceptable level. We would

Table of Contents

- Director's Cut
- Fleet Captain Note
- Maintenance Director Note
- Safety at Sea Seminar
- Blackboard Tests
- Navy Sailing Polo Shirts Update
- Sailing Movies for Binge Watching
- OSTS Facebook Page
- Email Opt-Out
- Thank you!

break each block into two sessions (i.e., Block 1A and 1B). This would enable us to train more midshipmen and start at any point during the summer. The plan is still coming together but would involve a week of local area day sailing, starting with a morning classroom or dockside session. The second week may have a few different scenarios - perhaps extended day sailing, with night hours, but not sailing overnight or hot racking. It may extend to sailing down the Chesapeake Bay and out into the Atlantic Ocean for an offshore leg up the coast, then back to base, or potentially a DELMARVA circumnavigation. While this is not ideal from an experiential leadership standpoint, we would still be providing much needed training to help prepare our midshipmen for the Fleet.

CAPT Dave Jackson mentions in his column that we are shooting to have 13 Navy 44's available for OSTS to use for our summer blocks. We gained a few additional boats due to most of the Varsity Offshore Sailing Team (VOST) races being cancelled already for this summer. We plan on using 11 for training and have two available as ready spares or backup boats.

There are still many unknown variables with this pandemic, but we need to have plans in place for all contingencies, so we are ready for action when conditions permit. We understand that many of our volunteers are also working through uncertain times with regards to employment, the economy, and keeping their families safe. Some of you may fall into the high-risk category. If your priorities have changed and you're unable to support OSTS if we are able to proceed with our program, we fully understand and hope you can come back under different circumstances.



Given our current restrictions, we are not likely to be able to finish any outstanding XO PQS qualifications this year for anyone who still needs both Watch Captain and a DELMARVA circumnavigation for their D-CS. However, if you are on a two-year program, close to getting your qualification, and can support this summer, please let us know. **LT Christian Burton** will be polling all of the potential XOs via Google Drive to see where you're at in the process. This is a good time to keep working on your D-qual exams on Blackboard. **Fleet Captain John Formisano** also mentions an ASA App in his column you might find useful as you binge watch sailing movies.

LT Burton also put together a new summer preference Google Drive sign-up sheet for all of our current D-qualified volunteers for the two-week blocks. The link is:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1aMpwMO0G72IT071IV1aQmCLfBCSClCgRlfXm1oGpVI8/edit?usp=sharing>

We are trying to compile information for the Superintendent's office, so if you can still help this summer, please sign up for what you think might work, as soon as possible. Again, we understand that things are changing constantly in regard to the COVID-19 outbreak, but it will help us plan if we have an idea on numbers.

We are working with VOST to potentially utilize some of their D-Qualified midshipmen to work with OSTs as Skippers and XOs so we can meet our goal of sending out 11 boats per modified block. We also have four to five D-Qualified TAD Ensings/2nd LTs for OSTs, and potentially more from VOST.

We will continue to update you as this situation unfolds. Thanks to all of you for your continued support of the program and our midshipmen. We wish all of you the best. Stay safe, healthy and stay home if you're not required to go into work. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that social distancing is one of the most effective ways of slowing the spread of COVID-19, along with frequent and thorough handwashing and sanitizing commonly touched surfaces.

FLEET CAPTAIN NOTE

by *John Formisano*



Skipper John Formisano

As you read this, I hope you're healthy and I will assume that if you're like me you're thinking about sailing but pinned down at home. Since I don't have any news that isn't in another column here, I thought I would focus on things that you can do at home with our ever-present devices to fill some of your virtual sailing needs. I know that past newsletters have

done a few columns about helpful mobile phone apps and I'm purposely skipping over the Navigation, Tide, Wind and Buoy finder apps as they have been covered before but below are a few that I have found helpful, informative and even a bit entertaining.



The **ASA's Sailing Challenge** app enables you to virtually sail your small boat and it reinforces sail trim basics. It is also helpful to use with the midshipmen who may need another approach to learning points of sail.



A good app to knock off some of your rust, and to help the visual learners in your crew are knot tying apps. Two that I like, and use are **Animated Knots** by Grog (\$4.99) and **Knots 3D** (free). When you have a need to test your bowline and hitches these are great refreshers.

If you want to learn more about Celestial Navigation, the Vanderbilt University Astro Navigation on-line course is a great way to learn it. In fact, when I took the Celestial Navigation class at Annapolis School of Seamanship this course was the basic structure they used.

<https://my.vanderbilt.edu/astronav/>



There are also a few apps that you can use once you've mastered this course. The two I would recommend are **StarPilot** and **CamSextant**. Note that StarPilot is not free and was the most I've ever paid for an app. StarPilot does celestial sight reductions of all bodies using high-precision internal almanac. It has mathematical and graphic solutions for position fixes, great circle, rhumb line, traverse and composite sailings, all current problems, piloting solutions, and much more. Then lunar distance method of finding GMT from the sky is included along with a unique graphical Sight Planner. The new Sight Analyzer function helps you get the most accurate results from a series of sights.



Obviously if you want to do celestial navigation, you need a sextant, and of course there is an app for that. **CamSextant** App uses your phone camera as a sextant. You can also check out a traditional sextant for use during your summer block sail.



One more app which I find useful, even when sitting at home watching the storms roll in is the **MyRadar Weather** App. It is simple and direct because it just goes directly to the weather map radar and doesn't push other things at you that you might not want. There are many weather apps out there and you probably already have one, but this is the one I go to most often. It works when you have a cellular signal. If you just want to see where the storm is while sitting at home, you can add it to your virtual tool bag.

We do have onboard now SiriusXM® Marine Weather capability on the Furuno and it's awesome. You'll certainly be hearing more about this. I was able to participate in the staff training session before the lockdown and I can tell you that it's light years ahead of the old Weather Fax feature.

I hope to see everyone soon.



MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR NOTE

by CAPT David Jackson, USN(ret)

So much for having ten OSTs boats in Santee Basin by the end of March! Thanks to COVID-19 we only have three OSTs boats in the Basin. Whenever we are allowed to get back to work, we expect it will take SCRD approximately 30 days to deliver the ten boats that remain to be delivered ... making 13 boats available for OSTs. Once the boats are delivered, we will load them out, bend on the main sails and be ready to do a shake down sail. **Renee Mehl** will coordinate a cadre of volunteers to shake down the boats before we start training midshipmen.

Stay healthy, keep in shape and fingers crossed, we will hopefully see you on the water in a month or so.

FROM THE LIEUTENANT

by LT Christian Burton, USN



Thank you to all that have provided feedback on the D-Qualification exams and testing process. I've been compiling your thoughts and plan on implementing much of your feedback into the training pipeline/process in the coming months. Continuous process improvement is a core component of our program, and your feedback is a key piece to that, so please keep it coming.

Additionally, I know many of you have been using this time to knock out your D-Qualification exams, and that is great. If you haven't, I encourage you to use the time we have in isolation to do so. I'll be sending out an updated version of the qualification tracker in the next couple of weeks to reflect all of the work you have put in to date. It will be in a slightly different format than the previous version based on feedback and questions I received from you all. Hopefully it will be a little easier for you all to interpret going forward.

Thank you for your continued support of our program during these unique times and stay safe.

SAFETY AT SEA SEMINAR

The Marine Trades Association of Maryland (MTAM) is working on PayPal® refunds for anyone who registered for the seminar online and has not received theirs yet. Thanks for your patience while they sort through processing issues.

There is an online equivalent for the US Sailing Offshore certificate that will satisfy your D-Qualification PQS. This US Sailing sponsored online course is an alternative or equivalent to the In-Person US Sailing Sanctioned Offshore Safety at Sea course. This course features ten modules of online Safety at Sea curriculum designed for sailors of all types and levels - cruisers and racers, novices and experts. Course fee is \$85 (\$75 if you're a US Sailing member). The course is about 10 hours long and is great training. You can register at the following link:

<https://www.boaterexam.com/sailing/safetyatsea/>

USNA will offer the seminar for free in spring of 2021 for all volunteers who still need to take the course for their D-CS qualification or for their D-OS 5-year renewal. We will not be reimbursing you for the online course at this time, unless you sail with us this summer, and need the certificate for your qualification.

BLACKBOARD® TESTS

While we are in a hiatus, now is a good time to study and catch up on your D-Qualification exams. You can take them one subject at a time. It is not necessary to take them all at once. There are 14 online D-qualification test segments. The navigation test is a practical exam and you will need to do chart plotting.

You can take the other Blackboard® online tests any time, and you can take each test twice. Blackboard® will pull different questions from the pool for your second attempt. A recommended test schedule, based on the class schedule, was published in the January newsletter. We keep about the past 12 months of OSTs newsletters posted on the Navy Sailing website for your reference at: <https://www.usna.edu/Sailing/osts/Newsletters.php>.

A handy guide to references that are specific to exams is also posted on Blackboard® under the *Books and References* tab and information is also online at many sailing-related websites. If you have any problems accessing exams or signing into Blackboard®, please contact **LT Christian Burton**.

Current D-Qualification holders must pass the Rules of the Road (RoR) exam annually and must take a Quarterly RoR refresher exam before summer blocks, and in the Fall if participating in Fall training. Current D-qualification holders must also pass the Navigation practical exam every two (2) years, D-qualification Proficiency exams (13 tests) every three (3) years and attend a Safety at Sea Seminar every five (5) years. Exams are posted on Blackboard® in the OSTs Section under the tabs *D-Qual Exam*, *RoR Annual Exam*, and *Quarterly RoR Refresher Exam*.

Additionally, the following link will take you to our current qualification tracker. You are able to view (not edit). This is to assist in helping you in tracking your qualification timelines and post D-qual proficiency requirements. Legend: Green - current, Yellow - due within 1 year or in current year, and Red - overdue and D-Qual suspended.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zTJQqiLLH9gitFKLfr8QjO6kBAhLooQhQ17pyGQd5I/edit?usp=sharing>

NAVAL SAILING POLO SHIRTS UPDATE

Our order of Navy Sailing long sleeve polo shirts has been put on hold given the Midshipmen Store is closed until further notice. We will communicate a distribution plan as soon as the shirts are ready. Your checks, made out to Frank Day, will not be cashed until the shirts are available. However, if you wish to

