

By J.K. Waltenbaugh

If you were to isolate two men with nothing but an aardvark, they would devise some method of using the aardvark to make one of them look inferior. And so it is with boardsailing. Racers have taken a fun and exciting sport and found a way to create still another hierarchy in the universe of rank and file.

If you're not interested in proving to your fellow man that he is worthless when it comes to maneuvering his board around buoys, are you doomed to a life of solitary sailing, void of the exciting companionship of others who share your common disinterest? No! I have a plan! An alternative!

What I'm talking about is just plain old-fashioned fun. People don't have fun anymore — they win or lose. You hear that it's fun to win, but it's not. It's exciting, uplifting, and exhilarating but it isn't fun. And losing? Man, losing is always the pits! It's time to forget about competition — man's craving for coronary complications — and learn once again how to have fun. I can't think of a better way than underground racing.

Let's face it, regattas and get-togethers are always initiated by the more aggressive and competitive Type-A individuals. I don't know about you, but I know I'm just too laid back, or just don't have what it takes to put something like that together. So in order to meet others of a common mind, we have to rely on races and regattas organized by these competitors. And just by the nature of the organizers, the events will be fiercely contested.

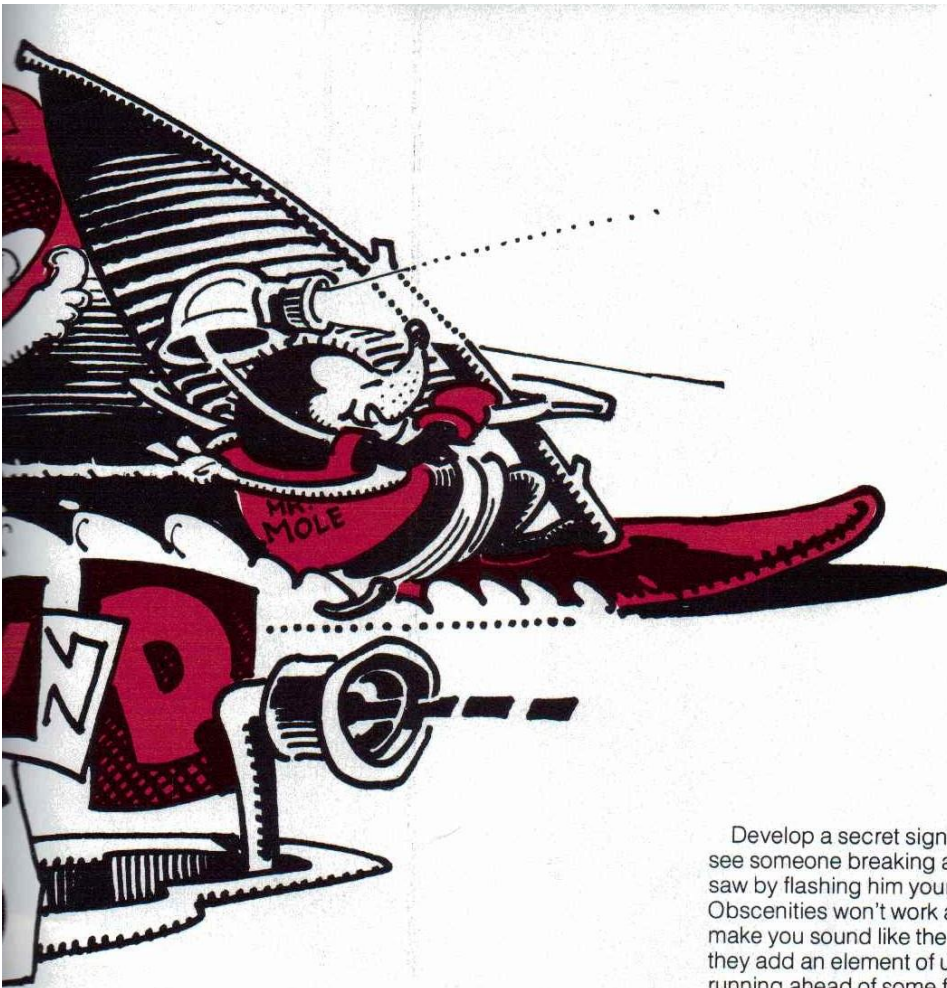
Underground racing is your involvement in the organized race for a purpose other than winning. You will be sharing the course with other racers, but not actually competing against them. To you they are nothing more than moving marks, objects to be avoided. On the course, also, will be other underground racers who look and act just like the real thing, but are not. Known only to you, they must try to keep their true identities secret or risk blowing it among their fellow racers on two levels — much like a double agent, but without the pressure. Confusion shows that you are well on your way to becoming a first-class underground racer. It is also a good base from which to detail a little more of the

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organization of this reverse competition.

First of all there should be the smallest amount of organization; the less, the better. Really, just about all the organization you need is in knowing who is taking part in the underground race. This can be difficult. We are a secret society who risk getting chucked out of the race if discovered. Be careful, the minds of real racers work in strange ways.

In order to hold this underground event you need at least two. It can be done alone, but for some reason it's not as much fun. Start looking for those who you think might be interested, and whose basic outlook is similar to yours. They can usually be found sleeping in their cars, trying to pick up



the girls left on the shore by the "competitive racers," or in the general vicinity of the food and beer; in short, anywhere but on the starting line.

The goal of the underground race is quite simple and should be understood by all. The last person across the finish line, within the committee's time limit, wins. Penalty minutes or seconds can be deducted from an individual's time for breaking the rules.

The major rule is that you must always be moving forward in relation to the direction of the course. Stopping is forbidden, except when maneuvering around a mark. Falling off or dropping your sail should be penalized heavily; 720's are limited to two. And going backward, for whatever reason, is an offense punishable by buying the first round of après-race beers. This last offense is abominable because it is obvious and tends to blow the cover. Added penalty for this offense is sailing full speed to the next mark.

The last and most important rule is to never, never, under any circumstances, interfere with one of the "real racers." Think of them as forbidden fruit — they must be avoided at all cost. Gladly sacrifice time not to interfere with them. The very survival of underground racing depends on it! Penalty times for each offense should be decided on before the race, but breaking the "non-interference directive" should always result in immediate disqualification.

Each underground racer is responsible for penalizing himself and keeping track of his own penalty time. Sure! If you've ever played a Sunday afternoon game of golf you know how well that works! There is much to be said for the power of rationalization and the weakness of the will.

Develop a secret sign, or possibly a code word. When you see someone breaking a rule you can let him know that you saw by flashing him your sign, or screaming your code word. Obscenities won't work as code words because they tend to make you sound like the rest of the racers. However, if used, they add an element of unpredictability. If you happen to be running ahead of some foul-mouth who knows nothing about the event, you could be subtracting needless minutes from your time!

As you near the end of the course, you are going to become more conspicuous, if only because everyone else has finished. Here, your novice techniques must become more and more subtle. Stumble a little but be careful not to fall.

This is also where the "competition" gets hot and heavy. Now it is usually just you and your confederates left on the water and strategy begins to come into play. Who can go the slowest without actually stopping? Who can get himself locked into a dead zone behind another's sail? Who can get on the widest and longest tack?

By the time you cross the finish line, you'll be in for a deluge of free technical advice plus a lot of kidding. Be prepared for some very unflattering remarks. Consider ego

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deflation another side benefit.

Now comes the moment of truth. Over beers, the times and penalties can be totaled and subtracted. If there are any major disputes, it is majority rule with everyone voting, character being of major consideration. And in the end a winner should be named. Event-by-event records can be kept and a champion crowned for the year. Trophies, plaques, scrolls . . . it's all possible.

I regret that I'm no longer able to be a part of my brain child. My speeding-to-the-next-mark penalties led me to a 10th last month. Last week I placed sixth. I received an invitation to the Bolsa Chica Backwater Bash next month, and with a little luck and a good start . . .