

Top Tip #3

This month's top tip comes from **Richard Cambrook**. Most of you will already know Richard, but for those who don't, he's the one who sails that annoyingly quick yellow solo that is usually out in front.

When did you last check your centre board slot gasket?

I have replaced mine twice recently as I find that it gets chewed up at the front of the case quite quickly, particularly if I put the board down too far in the heat of a tight and fast mark rounding. Too far being when the board handle hits the traveller thwart! (also hurts the fingers!!).

I have also found that the gasket "learns" to stay open if you inadvertently leave the board just sticking down slightly out of the box when you leave your boat on the trolley.

If you find that water comes up the front of the plate case and in to the boat when you are planing, then its time to replace the slot gasket.

You might also find that water is swirling round inside the back of the plate case, indicating that the gasket damage is behind the plate.

I use the tough stretchable sailcloth that most chandlers sell. I did try the more rigid mylar strip, but found this actually got taken up into the plate case with the board and then permanently kinked.

When changing the gasket it is necessary to stretch the cloth, virtually as hard as you can, as you screw it down.

To do this I fix one end on the boat, then stretch the free end to my car tow hitch. I don't actually drive the car away to stretch the gasket, but the tow hitch is a good anchorage point at just about the right height, to enable me to tension up the sailcloth as it lies along the line of the centreboard box, enabling me to screw the cloth down in easy stages.

I put a bit of paint on each screw as I put it in, to try and stop water soaking in to the hog, then I fill the screw heads with a soft epoxy filler that Halfords sell for car body work, This is particularly easy to use as it doesn't need mixing. Lastly sand to a completely smooth finish.

I now have the plate and plate case marked to try and stop myself putting the board down too far and hopefully make the gasket last longer.