

T-shirt Etiquette

By Andrew York – [click here](#) for the 1985 Lasernews original (which also includes a hilarious article by world famous navigator Adriene Cahalan on the 1984/85 Nationals in WA)



Andrew York

If you have not already become aware of it there is an art to wearing the right clothing at a sailing regatta. I am not talking about your Brian Rockford tracksuit or your Polo shirt (Lacoste is old hat) but your humble T-shirt. You can tell everything about the sailor by the T-shirt he wears.

It has been common practice since before the Ark to sell T-shirts at regattas, so any sailor worth his salt should have a wardrobe full of them. But for those of you who are new to the game or have not had the sense to partake of the ritual of buying T-shirts at regattas, here is some advice.

When you go to your next regatta buy a T-shirt, but under no circumstances should

you wear it there. Put it away for use later. Rule number one of T-shirt etiquette is: **Do not wear the T-shirt of the regatta you are at.** If you do it is like wearing a neon sign telling everyone that you are a rank amateur.

Now if you are new to sailing it is acceptable to wear T-shirts from your previous sport to the first few regattas. T-shirts emblazoned with "1982 Ice Hockey World Championship" or "Olympic Rowing Team" will create a good impression with your new friends. But if you do not have any of these an old America's Cup one damming the New York Yacht Club will do.

At your second regatta you may think "you beauty I'll wear the T-shirt from my first regatta". If you do and it was held only a few weeks before you had better be careful not to run into any smart arses who will ask you that embarrassing question. How did you go?

After a season or two you might have a nice little collection coming along. This is when you can feel at ease when pulling out a T-shirt to wear. You will not be caught out at any three day regatta but are still only at the first plateau on your climb to become a master of the art of T-shirt etiquette.

Now if you have been in your class for quite a few years and have not been getting anywhere near the top of the fleet, wearing all the right T-shirts will not be impressing anyone because they will all recognise you. Your only alternative is to get out of that class and start off in another one. It may not be the most constructive step if to improve your sailing but it will improve the diversity of your collection no end.

To make the best impression on your new friends wear the T-shirts from your previous class to the regattas in your new one. This brings us to **rule number two** of T-shirt etiquette: When wearing T-shirts at a regatta a **T-shirt from a different class out ranks any T-shirts of the class you are sailing in.** The above rule is generally true but there are a couple of exceptions I will quickly run through. If you are sailing in the E22 Nationals your 1952 Sabot

T-shirt is not going to impress anyone so leave it at home. This applies to all your junior class T-shirts if you are over 21. The exception being your Shell Youthsail T-shirt. This T-shirt tells everyone that you are exceptionally talented to be chosen to attend *or* that you come from a hick town where the others are even more backward at sailing than you are. It is acceptable to wear this into your mid-twenties and if you have a mate with a screen printer you can keep on wearing it after he has neatly screened "Coach" onto it.

If you are good looking, talented and happen to have bribed a few selection committees so that you have secured a place to your class's World Championships or at least a major regatta overseas the next step is easy. It is a well known fact worldwide that a T-shirt from an overseas regatta is worth a cupboard full of local ones. So buy the T-shirt of the regatta and keep your eyes open for a T-shirt you like. When you see one just stroll up to the guy wearing it and offer to trade. If he does not like the one you are wearing tell him about the great ones in your collection back at the motel. If he says he has a good collection also, it is polite to offer to bring your collection around to his for the big trade. However, if it appears he is wearing his only good T-shirt drag him around to your place and rip the shirt off his back as soon as he has chosen one of yours. It is obvious that he knows less about T-shirt etiquette than you, so he is not worth wasting any more time with.

Americans are masters at the art of T-shirt swapping and usually bring a suitcase full just to swap. They are however suckers for the quality Australian product and you may be able to get three or four to one of your best couple of T-shirts.

The Japanese always seem to have really neat designs on their T-shirts but you have to get in early to find the biggest guy from Japan at the regatta to swap with.

Just as T-shirts from overseas are valued, the ones from the most remote places are prized. The Poms who work in Saudi Arabia however are dumb enough to let you trade one for one for their Red Sea Sailing Club T-shirts if you can talk fast enough.

By now it should be clear that the correctly chosen T-shirt is the ultimate status symbol. To make the biggest impression you simply wear the T-shirt you brought back from overseas when you were sailing in the World Championships in another class.

Congratulations you can hold your head high as you are now a master of the art of T-shirt etiquette. There is only one way you can improve on this and I think it has been done. Win the America's Cup for the first time in 132 years and become a national celebrity. Then all you have to do is embroider the initials J.B. onto your T-shirts.

Good Luck

Footnote:

Andrew York won the 1978 Nationals and the NSW Champs in 1981 and 1984. He was also Chairman of the NSW/ACT District and wrote many articles in the District's [Lasernews](#) on improving your Laser sailing. His other short but seminal paper which changed the world on sailing against current can be read in the [April 1996 Lasernews](#).

Andrew also instigated the famous Yorks Laser Slalom which was run from his father's house in Drummoyne. You can read all about in the [Lasernews Archive](#).