

# Practical Sailor™

## Polar Testing

*Gear that made the grade on a nonstop sail around the Americas.*



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# Around the Americas in a Vega

The story of Matt Rutherford's non-stop solo circumnavigation of the Americas almost did not make it into this magazine. Clearly, this was not for lack of interest or admiration.

Rutherford, who took 309 days to sail the 27,000-mile route in a 36-year-old, 27-foot Albin Vega, braved icebergs in the Northwest Passage, freezing winds in the Bering Straits, and relentless gales near Cape Horn. His was a tale of great adventure, the kind that sailors love to hear and tell.

But as a magazine that advocates safe practices at sea, we can't condone such adventures without reservation. Although Rutherford never required rescue, lives have been lost saving people like him, who knowingly put themselves at great risk.

But doesn't every voyage entail risk? How much precaution is enough? There is no simple answer, but the safety requirements set for offshore races like the Newport-Bermuda Race offer a good guide for cruisers as well.

A more clear-cut matter is that of watchkeeping. Like the recent string of teens who sought to become the youngest solo circumnavigator, Rutherford couldn't maintain a constant watch, which in turn put others at risk.

Many singlehanders, close friends included, will argue this point. They'll remind me that Rutherford spent most of his time in trackless

ocean occupied only by whales and albatross; that any ship coursing the waters would have picked him up on radar, or been unharmed in a collision. They will also explain that many singlehanders keep more rigorous watches than short-handed cruisers.

I certainly don't think that we should try to contain the urge to go to sea alone. We can't. Like hunger or thirst, the impulse to test our limits is part of the human condition.

In his study of world mythology "The Hero With a Thousand Faces," Joseph Campbell describes this endeavour of casting off the bounds of society, undergoing great trials, and returning transformed. It is a practice, he writes, that has been, and will continue to be, an important part of every culture.

From Odysseus to Harry Potter, the hero has a thousand faces, and one of them is our own.

As Rutherford found, for a young person with relatively little money, a small-boat voyage offers a tempting route to initiation. The boat provides the means to escape, and the waiting sea delivers the physical, emotional, and spiritual trials that can be life-changing—or as some might say, "character-building."

I was several years younger than Rutherford when I stepped on an Albin Vega myself, gauging its potential for a voyage to the South Pacific. (Judging it too tiny for my tastes, I ultimately opt-

ed for a much older, but bigger boat.) And Technical Editor Ralph Naranjo fondly recalls his own experience setting out to Hawaii in an Excalibur 26. Like Rutherford, we could not afford boats or gear that would increase the margin of safety, but we went anyway. The call to adventure, it seems, has an affinity for people with empty pockets.

I sincerely hope Rutherford's example inspires others to dream of adventures at sea, even if they are young, broke, and novice sailors. But they should remember that the hero's journey involves incremental tests, each one leading to the next. Rutherford had the good sense to build upon his experiences—first in the Intra-coastal Waterway, later in the North Atlantic—before setting out on his voyage around the Americas.

I look forward Rutherford's next adventure, but I hope he invites a friend along—and not only to help keep watch. A steady companion is good for the soul, and it is one of the surest way to stay off the rocks.



Cover photo: Matt Rutherford's Albin Vega St. Brendan returns home. (Photo courtesy of Mark Duehmig)

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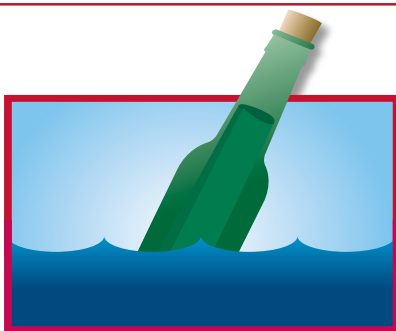
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## MAILPORT



### DINGHY LAUNCHER

I thought you might like to know of a dinghy-wheel manufacturer that I came across that wasn't included in your last evaluation (PS, October 2011). Beachmaster boat wheels ([www.beachmaster.co.nz](http://www.beachmaster.co.nz)) appear to be very well designed and tuck in nicely behind the transom when in the retracted position, eliminating the windage issue of some other designs.

Jack Reid  
Gabriola Island, B.C.

### IPAD GLARE

In regard to your iPad apps article in the March 2012 issue: We love our iPad, but when I take it outside, it has the most terrible screen for outdoor viewing I've ever seen. (Yes, I've got it landscaped.) We even added an antiglare film! What am I missing here?

From what I see, this thing is unacceptable for outside viewing.

Roy Warner  
Via email

We had the same issue—apparently so did many people, and Apple took notice. The company's newest iterations—the iPad 3 and the upcoming iPad 4—were designed with retina display screens, which are supposed to be easier to read in sunlight.

### NOFLEX = NO FUNK

In reference to your February 2012 article on holding tank additives: We had previously used Odorlos on another boat with good effect, but in our new-to-us boat, persistent odors continued to emanate, even with regular use of Odorlos and frequent



**A FLEET OF FRIENDSHIPS:** *The Friendship Sloop Society's 52nd annual Homecoming Rendezvous and Regatta will be held this month in Rockland, Maine. The event, set for July 19 through July 21, will feature races, demonstrations, and visits aboard historic Friendship sloops. For more information, visit [www.fss.org](http://www.fss.org).*

flushing of the tank. In spring 2010, we began using NoFlex Digestor to tackle the problem. After 1½ years of regular application, it has greatly improved the "health" of the tank and reduced odors that had lingered. It also does a good job of cleaning the bowl and hoses. The company is based in Burlington, Ontario; the product page on the website is: <http://www.jetvac.ca/category/noflex-digestor.html>. We found it locally at Steveston Marine in Vancouver, B.C.

Kirsty Henderson  
Canty, Catalina 34 Mark II  
Vancouver, B.C.

We've added the NoFlex to the followup test roster.

### RACOR

I have a Racor fuel/water separator Model S3240 mounted on my RIB dinghy. The problem is that the bowl sticks to the filter. I tried coating the filter threads with grease, TefGel, and silicone, and nothing seemed to prevent the seizing. Tired of purchasing a new bowl every time I changed the filter, I contacted Racor. It seems they are aware of the problem and are in the process of designing a new filter. In the meantime, they offered to send me a new filter and bowl at

[WWW.PRACTICAL-SAILOR.COM](http://WWW.PRACTICAL-SAILOR.COM)

## Summer Sun and Seasonal Storms

Summer is in full swing, and that means more time spent under sail and under the sun. Does your sunscreen offer adequate protection from the sun's damaging UV rays? To find out, read our most recent test of sunscreens on [www.practical-sailor.com](http://www.practical-sailor.com).

Summer also heralds the tropical storm and hurricane season, which runs June 1 through Nov. 1. We've dusted off a few articles from the archives to help you prepare your boat ahead of summer storms. Find "Lines, Snubbers, and Other Gear for Battening Down Ahead of Storms" and "How to Help Your Boat Survive a Storm" on [www.practical-sailor.com](http://www.practical-sailor.com).

Be sure to sign up for our e-letter, *Waypoints*, which delivers PS's latest happenings and tips directly to your inbox. Sign up at [www.practical-sailor.com](http://www.practical-sailor.com).

