

GIN POLE NOTES

Below follows email questions and discussion about J/24 Gin Poles in September 2004

Clarke's Contraption

(from Irish J/24 Newsletter, November 1998) Peter Gray's launching instructions for the Westerns (1998) declared that Michael Clarke has a contraption, and, sure enough this contraption was used to lower all the masts as visiting boats lifted out.

Like all good ideas it was copied from someone else: from Hank Killion, former World President of the J/24 Class. It is a gin-pole, made from a light, strong, hollow tube, say a shortened GP14 mast, which is stepped securely over the deck eye that takes the spinnaker downhaul. At the top there is a 3:1 block and tackle which is attached to a lifting bowline round the mast just under the spreaders - that is a foot or two above the centre of gravity - and outside the lowers, with a tail of its rope left hanging to pull the bowline down when necessary.

The one critical dimension is that the 3:1 block is about 20 feet off the deck, that is enough so that when chock-a-block the mast foot just emerges from its deck hole. With the hoisting point a foot or two above centre of gravity, the mast will conveniently lift and lower at a near vertical angle.

The gin-pole is held up by shrouds clipped to the tweeker eyes (check they are stoutly bolted underneath) and a forestay lashed to the foredeck mooring cleat.

With care to keep dangling lines clear and so forth, it is a surprisingly easy job for one person to raise or lower a J/24 mast and is perhaps best done ashore for steadiness.

Gin Pole Design Again

Edited additions from two subsequent Irish J/24 newsletters after requests for information again about making and using a gin pole. The text below is adapted from earlier Irish J/24 Newsletter pieces about a gin pole on a Westerly.

The key dimension is that the 3:1 block be 20 to 21 feet off the deck, so that when chock-a-block the mast foot just emerges from its deck hole. The gin-pole is held up by shrouds clipped to the tweeker eyes (check they are stoutly bolted) and a forestay to the foredeck mooring cleat. These tweeker eyes are at maximum beam on a Westerly.

On other boats the gin pole's aft shrouds fastening must be well out from the centre line for a stable triangular rig base. Do not use Genoa cars: support across the boat too little. Gin pole with mast fall sideways mid-hoist.

With care to keep dangling lines clear, it is a surprisingly easy job for one person to raise or lower a J/24 mast, and perhaps best done ashore for steadiness. First haul up to take the mast load on the gin pole loop. Then it is safe to undo shrouds and forestay, haul up and the foot out. Lower away flat to the pushpit and pulpit. Better for road towing, let foot under pulpit and forward, and mast top above pushpit.

Hoisting, loop under crosstrees, haul away, forward side of the mast up, pushing cross trees through and past gin pole aft shrouds, bringing the mast foot along the deck into the hole. Lower into hole onto mast foot. Stabilise mast with foot-bolts (pins are handier – say 6mm split pins) and fit outers and forestay. Pull down the bowline by its tail. Fasten lowers. Take away pole. Fix and adjust rigging.

Three warnings.

1 Never ever be under the mast when hoisting. It may fall. Skull fracture can be fatal.

2 A J/24 mast may seem to stand without forestay, shrouds or foot-pins. Beware, it slips on the step and falls over. As it does so, its leverage may open the deck, and or bend the mast, or worse

3 Maximum width athwartships between the aft shrouds of the ginpole is vital for stability. Without stability athwartships, half way up the hoist, weigh at a height, the whole lot will fall over sideways. Nearby may be a fine glass house or someone else's expensive boat with mast down ready to break the fall of your J/24 mast.

These three warnings are all based on things that actually have (nearly) happened.

Picture – Robin and Peter hoisting the mast on Luder Too at 2003 National Championship (photo John McVitty)

