

Kelly Gough—Flying Scot NA Champ

The popularity of the 47-year old Flying Scot has never waned because of the people who sail them and because of the boat's appealing simplicity. Kelly Gough, 46, of Coppel, Texas, and his wife Heidi, won the class's 2004 North American Championship on Lake Carlyle, Ill. Gough's winning formula fits with the style of the boat—everything's in moderation—from starts to rig tension—except, of course, when it's time to tension the vang.

You said winning this championship was special. Why was that?

It was great being able to sail, and win, with my wife Heidi. We've done a lot of sailing together in past years, but her work schedule and raising our son Kevin has made it tough for her to join me for the last two years. This event was extra special because we brought Kevin with us and I think being able to have that time with him on shore after the races actually relaxed me, and as a result, I sailed better.

Taking the time to be sure all the little things are just right really builds confidence. I knew that adjustability would be key at Lake Carlyle because it would be puffy and shifty, so I made sure everything worked and ran as smooth as possible. The bottom was all set before we arrived so we were able to just concentrate on "doing our homework" for the local conditions.

You started off strong and had the lead after the first day. You were consis-

get to any new breeze that materializes is critical. But we also had clear air with good speed at the gun, usually in a hole with the ability to tack. I think one of the things that helped us with our boatspeed was our ability to change gears smoothly.

Some Flying Scot teams race with three people on board, but many sail with two. You only had two and had spectacular races in the breeziest stuff.

Heidi is agile and even though there's only two of us, I'm confident I can position the boat where I need and maintain control in any breeze. She has the strength to adjust the jib sheet constantly, which makes a big difference working through the puffs. I've had a few new boats over the past 10 years, but they've been rigged nearly identically and I've also used one brand of sails. Because I was so familiar with the boat setup, sails, and tuning, it was as if those variables were eliminated and we could focus on working the boat.

The Flying Scot is a relatively easy boat to sail, but difficult to sail well. What areas make the biggest difference?

Sometimes people try to make the Scot harder to sail than it needs to be as there are really only a few adjustments that make a difference: Jib sheet, mainsheet, and boom vang. The rest of the controls just follow these. Trim the sails properly, balance the boat, steer it smoothly, and you'll have adequate speed.

The vang tension is important upwind on the Scot. What do you look for?

One of the reasons I like the Scot so much is because vang sheeting fits my style of sailing. Since the Scot does not have a traveler, the vang needs to be tensioned big time in heavy wind, to keep the boat balanced. Usually around 10 knots—when the boat is beginning to get overpowered, and the mainsheet needs to be eased to keep the boat flat and balanced—I pull the vang on tight enough that the mast bends and flattens the sail. I look for control of the leech, but rarely is the upper batten hooked past parallel to the boom. A simple guide is to tension the vang until the boom travels sideways and doesn't rise up at all when you ease the sheet. I've told people that I'll pull the vang just tight enough that I think I might break the



Kelly and Heidi Gough went 1-2-2-2-3 to win the Flying Scot NAs. Says Kelly, "Because we have sailed a lot together the actual adjustments came quicker and smoother."

How did you prepare for this event?

I attacked this one as I have any of the major regattas in the past—by racing with our super tough fleet at White Rock (Dallas). I think racing two demanding races nearly every weekend, year 'round with great sailors like Richard Wade and Scott Mauney keeps us on our toes. Heidi and I practiced before the North Americans, and I made sure my boat was as prepared as best it could be.

What's your version of prepared?

tent in trying conditions. What was most important?

Getting off the line in a big fleet is key, and Heidi and I were starting well. I wouldn't say we were launched at every start, but because I had confidence in our boatspeed I didn't feel I ever had to put us in a risky place. We were never too far off the middle of the line, even if an end was favored. You could never be sure what to expect breeze-wise on an inland lake. Putting yourself in a spot where you can

boom, and then pull it a little more! I set up the tackle purchase so it two-blocks when the vang is fully tensioned. The vang must be eased before bearing off or the boom will break.

There seems to be some different alternatives in tuning for the Scot. Some sail the rig very sloppy, some sail very tight. What are these differences and what do they mean? What style do you use?

For years the only way to sail the Scot was with a very loose rig where there was measurable slop in the rig of 3 to 5 inches forward and aft. Four years ago the “tight rig” was introduced where the rig is tensioned quite

tight, almost 250 pounds when measured on the headstay with a tension gauge. These two tuning styles demand two very different jib designs.

The tight-rig jib is much fuller because there’s very little headstay sag in the tight rig. Over the past few years I’ve gradually reduced the slop in my looser rig until last year where I had only 1/2 to 1 inch. At this year’s Midwinters, I sailed a new “snug rig” where the rig was tensioned to only 100 pounds—just loose enough so I could still hook the headstay without any mechanical aids.

I also worked with my sailmaker in developing a “snug rig” jib this winter, which I sailed at Midwinters and North Americans. In my mind its nearly the best of both worlds—it gives the adjustability of the loose-rig jib and the forgiveness of the tight-rig jib, plus it’s still easy to set up at the dock. I think the ideal condition for the snug rig is three to 15 knots of breeze, which is what I sail in most of the time. We’re still plenty fast enough in the extremes, but we have an edge in the medium stuff.

Whatever tuning style you subscribe to, set the rake the same—somewhere close to 28°5'. To get this measurement, hoist a tape measure on the main halyard and measure to the top of the transom.

The Flying Scot has idiosyncrasies in its jib trimming. Can you explain what you are looking for and in which conditions?

The Scot is built with the jib leads farther off centerline than other one designs—somewhere about 14 degrees, while 8 to 10 degrees might be more optimum. To compensate, we all pull on the windward sheet to move the clew to windward and make the jib set up fuller and more powerful. In everything but drifting or survival conditions, we pull the windward sheet about 4 inches so the clew falls just below the middle of the seat. In breeze above 15 knots, we move the jib lead back about two holes (1 1/2").

Heidi constantly plays the leeward sheet so the top batten is never hooked tighter than straight back. It’s never eased more than angled out about 20 degrees in power up mode. The telltale off the top batten always flows. We never play the weather sheet once it’s set unless we’re sailing in the extremes. ♦

WINDWARD SHEETING



Trimming the windward jib sheet by as much as 4 inches on the Flying Scot pulls the bottom of the jib inboard to make it fuller and more powerful.