

The Ten Commandments of Beercan Racing

I Thou shalt not take anything other than safety too seriously. If you can only remember one commandment, this is the one. Relax, have fun, and keep it light. Late to the start? So what. Over early? Big deal. No instructions? Improvise. Too windy? Quit. Not enough wind? Break out the beer. The point is to have fun, but stay safe. Like the ad says, "Safe boating is no accident."

II Thou shalt honor the racing rules if thou knowest them. The US Sailing 2005-2008 Racing Rules, unless specifically stated elsewhere in the Sailing Instructions, is the current rules bible. Few sailors we know have actually studied it cover to cover: it's about as interesting as reading tax code or the phone book. For beer can racing, just remember some of the biggies (port tack boats shall avoid starboard ones; windward boats shall avoid leeward ones; and outside boats shall give room at the mark). Stay out of the way of bigger boats, pay your insurance premiums and keep a low profile unless you're sure you know what you're doing. Like most things, it boils down to common sense.

III Thou shalt not run out of beer. Beer (a.k.a., brewskis, chill pills, thought cylinders) is the beverage that lends its name to 'beer can' racing; obviously, you don't want to run out of the frothy nectar. Of course, you can drink whatever you want out there, but there's a reason these things aren't called milk bottle races, Coca-Cola can races, hot chocolate races or something else. Just why beer is so closely associated with this kind of racing escapes us at the moment, but it's a tradition we're happy to go along with.

IV Thou shalt not covet thy competitor's boat, sails, equipment, crew or PHRF rating. No excuses or whining; if you're lucky enough to have a sailboat, just go use it! You don't need the latest in zircon-encrusted widgetry or unobtainium sailcloth to have a great time out on the water with your friends. Even if your boat's a heaving pig, make modest goals and work toward improving on them from week to week. Or don't - it's only beer can racing.

V Thou shalt not amp out. No screaming, swearing, or overly aggressive tactics. Save that stuff for the office or, if you must, for Saturday's 'real' race. If you lose it in a Friday nighter, you're going to run out of crew - not to mention friends - in a big hurry. Downing a quick chill pill on the way to the starting line has been medically proven to have a calming influence on the nerves.

FAILURE TO ABIDE BY THESE LAWS  COULD EXCLUDE YOU FROM
BEERCAN HEAVEN!

TRANSCRIBED BY THE MONKS AT SPINNAKER SAILING OF REDWOOD CITY
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VI Thou shalt not protest thy neighbor. This is extremely tacky at this level of competition and should be avoided at all costs. Perhaps it's justifiable if one's boat is damaged and blame needs to be established, but on the whole, tossing a red flag is the height of bad taste in something as relatively inconsequential as a beer canner. Besides proving that you're unclear on the concept of beer can racing, it screws up everybody's evening, including yours. Don't do it - it's bad karma.

VII Thou shalt not mess up thy boat. Everybody knows some hardcore weekend warrior who ripped his sails up in a Friday night race and had to sit out the championship race on Saturday. The point is that it's not worth risking your boat and gear in such casual competition: like the song says, you got to know when to hold 'em, and know when to fold 'em. Avoid other boats at all costs, not to mention buoys and other hard objects. If you have the luxury of two sets of sails, use the old ones.

VIII Thou shalt always go to the yacht club afterwards. Part of the gestalt of beer can races is bellying up to the yacht club bar after the race. Etiquette demands that you congratulate the winners, as well as buy a round of drinks for your crew. Besides, the bar is a logical place to see old friends and make new ones. However, when meeting new sailors, avoid the gung-ho, overly serious types who rehash the evening in such gory detail that the post mortem (yawn) takes longer than the race. As much as we enjoy a quick romp around the cans, there's more to life.

IX Thou shalt bring thy spouse, kids, friends and whoever else wants to go. Twilight races are great forums for introducing new folks to sailing, such as your neighbors, out-of-town visitors, co-workers or maybe even the family dog. Always bring your significant other along, too - coed crews are happy crews. And don't just make the newcomers watch - give them a job on the boat. Get everyone involved.

X Thou shalt not worry; thou shalt be happy. Leave the cell phone in the car, bring the ghetto blaster. Lighten up, it's not the Big Boat Series. Have fun, and we'll see you out there!

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