

Find a boat to race on in Anchor Bay

There is regular demand for crew on boats racing in Anchor Bay. Check out the characteristics of each venue (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Sunday) at: <http://warmgear.com/AnchorBayRacingTriFold.pdf>.

The season starts in early May and goes through the end of September with a break in July for cruising and Mackinac racing. There is also a Fall Series which is on four weekends in October.

Cold and windy evenings increase the demand for crew, because most boats sail faster with more "live ballast" (sometimes known as "rail meat") to help keep the boat from heeling over too far. That's why there's an entry-level crew position called "sandbag."

As you get more experience you'll be asked to do more and more sophisticated things, starting with tailing sheets and grinding (cranking) on winches to trim sails, and moving up to spinnaker rigging and trimming. After about half a season of regular crewing you could have more opportunities to race on other boats. Different boats may be more or less inclined to teach new sailors. It generally takes years of experience, however, to become valuable to the boats that regularly *win* these weekend events.

To get a crew spot on a boat for an Anchor Bay race, show up at North Star Sail Club at or before 5:45 PM. A good spot to start is behind the club near the gin pole well. The gin pole is used to put up & take down masts and it usually has the American Flag flying from it. Be outgoing and friendly. Ask people if they know of anyone needing crew. Most boats start leaving the docks between 6:00 & 6:15 PM, but if the boat is berthed in another part of the club some extra time is required. Michael Clow's boat [*Desire*](#) is a couple of slips downriver from the gin pole and he can be a good contact who knows most of the racing boats. You might also ask for Murphy Palmer who is also "in the know" and has his boat, *Polarity*, just up river of the gin pole .

A good spot to start is behind the club near the gin pole well. The gin pole is used to put up and take down masts and it usually has the American Flag flying from it. Be outgoing and friendly, it's appropriate to ask "need crew?" to anyone who walks by looking like they might be a skipper. This is a little like being eyed over in a singles bar - but this is a seller's market, and the selection criteria are very different. The skippers are looking for sailing ability and experience, and sometimes muscles and body mass, if it's a windy evening.

If the skipper answers your "need crew?" with "maybe, but first I have to see if some people I invited are going to show up" that might be code for "yes, but I want to see if I can find someone better first." Make note or find out where his/her boat is located. Keep asking "need crew" until you get a commitment for the evening. If you're new, skippers have every right to look for people they know before taking on a stranger. Be patient, the same skipper might be back in 10 minutes with *changed* standards.

Another tip: Have all your gear with you and be ready to jump aboard. Don't say "I have to go back to the car to get my gear" or "I have to make a phone call first" after the skipper says you're on. They're probably short for time and want to get going right away.

If you are a non-swimmer or a weak swimmer, make absolutely certain that the skipper is aware of this, so that they apply the safety standards that they consider appropriate (which might be stricter than your own - and probably for good reason). **Always** wear a life jacket if you're a non-swimmer. Also, in a situation where two or more people fall in the water, it's important that the skipper knows who to rescue first. Note that even strong swimmers will have trouble swimming with foulies and boots on. There's no way to anticipate how

difficult this can be 'till you try it - so take the recommendations for life jacket use seriously - even if you're on the swim team. Also, on a boat that is new to you it is a good idea to wear a PFD.

You should have some form of water-repellant pants, aka "foul weather gear" to keep your bottom dry. The style with the bib front and suspenders are universally preferred but if you have a pair of waist high pants from some kind of land sport they work reasonably well for an evening race. For the top, a sweater and a light waterproof shell is usually sufficient initially. The traditional parka length marine jacket has more sophisticated closures and hood that becomes necessary for races longer than a couple of hours. It is important to wear some kind of synthetic top next to your torso. Go to <http://warmgear.com/outfitting.htm> where there is great info on basic marine apparel systems. If you don't have any of this gear you should still try for a crew spot, but you might have to be more selective (avoiding the smaller/wetter boats) or might have to mooch loaners off other crew or skippers. If you are a gear mooch then make sure you buy some drinks at the bar or find out what kind of food/munchies can be brought to the boat (always a good idea even if not mooching).

As you get more serious about crewing, you'll buy sailing boots and gloves, and you should also have a watch with a count-down timer. You can show initiative by having a copy of the race instructions and learning the signal flags used to signal the race courses and starting sequences.

Sailboat racing can be dangerous, and minor injuries are not unusual. You can be hit (very hard!) by the boom, you can be cut, scraped, banged, and bruised. You can have tendons pulled and bones broken if you don't understand the forces acting on various parts of the sails and rigging, or if you attempt to do things that are way beyond your experience and ability. So be careful, and always ask first if there are any safety concerns. Stay onboard, keep your head low, and assume that any piece of heavily-loaded gear could break at any instant until you become more knowledgeable.

Most skippers and crew consider themselves to be co-participants in a competitive sporting event; crew members voluntarily assume the risks associated with this participation. A few skippers (usually the more diligent and safer ones) will ask you to sign a "guest register" that includes a statement to that effect, or a liability waiver of some sort. These "waivers" of course will not remove the normal obligations of the skipper to operate the vessel in a safe and non-negligent manner - so you should feel free to sign such agreements without fear of signing away any important rights.

After the race you will be expected to help put the boat away. Even if you have no idea how to help, it's poor form to run back to the parking lot or yacht club until the skipper says it's okay to leave. There's usually a barbecue and trophy presentation at the yacht club, and it is normal etiquette for the skipper to buy one round of drinks for the crew after the race. But this is hardly universal practice, so don't misinterpret if it doesn't happen.

The post-race postmortems and general-purpose schmoozing at the bar are often the best parts of Anchor Bay racing. Even if you don't get a ride, or don't get to the club in time for the start, prospective crew should feel free to stop by and check it out. Post race can also be an opportunity to look for a ride even if you did not race that evening. Most skippers and crew are eager to talk about their boats the evening's race.

Paraphrased & edited from: <http://www.berkeleyyc.org/racing/friday/FRIDAYboat.html>