

Planing On – Sessions

Welcome to the Sessions... All things International 14 related.

Article 1 : October 22, 2021 – By Paul Galvez

Sailor Profile: Mikey “POLISH” Radziejowski



Most local fourteeners know Mikey Radziejowski aka Polish. I've known Mikey since he was a young goofy sailor at Richmond YC. Always chill and always friendly. Crewing on other people's boats and slowly working his way up the process. He's a good guy that loves to sail and has matured into a skipper with an impressive resume. Sailing with Evan Sjostedt, these two put in the time and effort to pull off a top 10 finish at the 2018 Worlds in SF. It was cool to watch these two improve and become masters of boat handling with a pace that got them a podium finish in the end. Mikey is also a sailmaker for the class and he's putting out some nice cloth these days. He was kind enough to sit down and answer a few questions so please enjoy the interview below.

-Where did you get your 14 start and how long have you been sailing 14s now?

I was already starting to feel burnt out on sailing Lasers when I was 14. I saw a 49er for the first time sailing around and I knew that Skiff Sailing was the only thing I wanted to do. So luckily, I got hooked up with Chad of the Skiff Sailing Foundation and he handed me a trapeze harness. A few months later I was sailing

on 18ft skiffs and 29ers and I knew I needed more. I started looking into other classes and I knew the 14 was a class sailing out Richmond. I don't remember how exactly, if it was through the forums on Sailing Anarchy or the old 14 website, but I got connected with Chris Hsu. We went out a few times on the circle, neither of us really knowing what we were doing, and spent a fair bit of time in the 14's natural position (on its side). I was hooked. After that I started sailing with Bradley VanVecten on the Woody and started going to some regattas, meeting folks in the class. Then hooked up with Chris Rutz and we started campaigning and moved beyond the survival phase of 14 sailing. That's when I started to really think about all the aspects of making a 14 go. It's with Chris that I first started my sail and rig development. And once Chris so generously loaned out his boat to me for Worlds, the rest was history. It's been about 16 years of sailing these fantastic boats, and I look forward to the next 30!

-What do you like best about the boat/class?

It's really hard to pinpoint one exact reason why I love these boats so much. The challenge of sailing these boats well is maybe one of the biggest reasons. Having sailed a fairly wide range of classes, it's without a doubt that the 14 requires the most finesse and skill out of any skiff to sail at a competitive level. The speed and efficiency that these boats have is another reason why. Sure, there are faster boats out there, but when you think about the fact that you are on a 14 ft monohull and easily sailing upwind at 12-16knts of speed is just mind numbing. Hitting mid 20s downwind helps too. And finally, these boats are just way too cool. The amount of technology, design, and development just speaks to my inner nerd and always keeps things exciting. Being able to come up with your own ideas and being able to test them and see what the other guys are doing and then getting to share the information is one of the best parts of this class. There are some really smart guys that sail these things.

-When did you win the International Canoe Worlds? Did you make your own sails for this event?

I won the IC World's in 2014 at Richmond Yacht Club. I did not make my own sails, however I had my own input and ideas, which were beautifully executed by Eric Taylor of Taylor Sails. That being said he really deserves all the credit, because at that point I had a very basic understanding of sail design and he managed to interpret my ramblings into some really fast sails. I knew I wanted sails that

looked more like 14 sails with a big square head and a straight leech on the main and a higher aspect jib. Other than that, I knew very little.

-How long have you been making sails now and what loft are you currently working at?

I have been working on and off as a sailmaker since I was 15, but for the past 7 years I have been working for Dave Hodges of Ullman Sails in Sant Cruz. Dave has been building and designing sails for over 30 years and we are one of the last lofts on the West Coast that still build sails in house. I have learned an insane amount on the dark magic that is sail making from Dave.

-As a Sail Designer and Maker, what are you looking for in setup and tuning of a International 14 jib/main/kite?

There are a lot of factors that effect the sail set up on these boats and so much of it is based on the gear you have and sailing style. What works for Evan and I, may not work for everyone else.

We really worked hard on rig tune and trying to simplify everything as much as possible. Rig tune is everything. Being able to carry the tightest possible head stay as soon as your fully powered up is huge. On the green boat, we basically had two rig settings. One setting was for anything below 12 knots and one was for everything above. The lower wind setting is still something we are refining, but the goal was to get the rig upright and loose and try to get the sails as full as possible. So this meant 8100 on the rake, (caps disconnected) with the headstay around 32 or less on the new style loose gauge. The shrouds and caps are basically tight enough so that the weather shrouds don't go slack when we are both on the wire. We play the vang and cunno with every puff, with the goal always having the mainsheet as close to two block as possible. This means as the wind increases, we hike harder, and pull the vang on and just pull enough cunno on to pull the wrinkles out. As most people know, we are still working out the light air sailing, as we do struggle being one of the heavier teams out there.

The heavy air setting is all about getting and keeping the headstay as tight as possible. We had our rake at 8070 and on the green boat we could get the headstay to 40 without breaking anything. Some of the other teams with newer

boats could get their headstays even tighter. From there it's pulling the vang on till you feel like you are about to break something, and then pulling a little bit more on. Seriously, till it's full survival, you can never have enough vang on. The goal is to keep the leech nice and tight without any mid leech sag. We really wanted to make sure our twist profile was nice and even. Cunno on to flatten the sail. The goal is always to have to main sheet as close to two block at all times. We also are super aggressive on pulling the daggerboard up to depower. If you can feel the boat tripping over itself, you must pull the board up. For the jib, once we are fully powered up, was car all the way out, tack all the way down, and aim for a twisty jib. You want the twist profiles to match between the two sails.

-What's so special about your sails? Any special sauce or just extra love during construction?

Well, I'd like to think what makes my sails so special is just the amount of time we spent developing them. We worked really hard on making sure that the sails did what we wanted them to, like the twist profiles and making sure we had no mid leech sag, or not getting too flat the more you vang and cunno. We spent a lot of time making sure the luff curve matched the rig. All this of course took a few iterations to figure out. The effort has paid off, not only in the sails that I built for myself, but for others in the fleet. Just look at Terry Gleeson's recent performance at Nationals, who showed up with a full suit of my sails straight out of the box.

Aside from that, I am very proud of building each one of these sails by hand, in the USA. I put a lot of effort into every detail of construction and design of these sails, with the help of Dave, and with each one built, something gets improved upon.

-When you measure a 14 rig for new sails, what are the general steps taken?

There are different methods from different sailmakers on how to measure rig bend. The way we go about it, is to start off with a main that we know fits the rig, or is close enough, and setting the sail up for a medium setting, which means tight rig setting, cunno on, vang on, mainsheet tight. Then we measure 8 equally distant sections down the rig. Then with a tight string strung from the top of the rig, down to the tack of the sail we measure to those sections. Luff curve is the most important thing on these boats, so it's super important to get these

measurements right. The rest of the measurements are standard, figuring out luff, leech, and foot. The jib involves a little bit of care to make sure the jib sheets correctly to the track. Because all the boats are slightly different, I like to make sure every detail is measured for all 3 sails.

- What is the typical life span of a competitive jib/kite/main if cared for properly?

If you take care of the sails properly you can get 2 or 3 seasons out of the main and jib and maybe 2 seasons out of the kite. The kites get thrashed on these boats no matter how well you take care of them.

-What do you recommend for proper handling, care, and maintenance of 14 sails?

I recommend making sure you always rinse off your sails with fresh water and make sure they are fully dry before you store them. Always roll the sails and I always untension the battens between regattas. Same with the kite, make sure it's rinsed and dry and flake it between regattas. During regattas I usually leave my battens tensioned to minimize things that I can forget. If it doesn't seem like the sails will dry over night, I would rather leave them wet and salty, since freshwater will mildew. Since most of us have to capsize our boats to put the mains on, just be mindful of what you are dragging your main on in the boatpark.

-I'm going to tap your brain on a few topics... Main Halyards on a 14, what do you think Yes or No?

Personally, I don't think it makes too much of a difference. There is a lot of argument against a halyard because of the compression, which is probably negligible in the grand scheme of things. The biggest advantage I see to not having a halyard is the ability to always have the main at the top band in the same spot every time. The rig bend and luff curve will always match up, which is huge. The luff curves and mast bend are not a consistent curve regardless of single or double spreader rig and as soon as you starting moving the sail up and down the rig, your sail shape gets screwed up.

-What are your thoughts on Poly Kites vs Nylon? What is your favorite cloth and why?

Poly kites in theory would be better, since they stretch less and don't soak up water, but they tend to explode when flogged hard and repeatedly shoving the kite into a small hole doesn't help. All the kites I build (and most other sailmakers) are out of nylon. They withstand the abuse a lot better and they have nylon kite materials with really good coating out there, so soaking up water isn't as big of an issue.

-AP Jib or a separate HVY Jib, what do you think?

I'm a huge fan of having two jibs. We spent a lot of time developing this and we found that in anything over 14 knots of wind our heavy jib was significantly faster than the AP jib. The heavy air jib we had for Richmond Worlds was a weapon. It was very short on the hoist and slightly flatter with a big square top to help twist the jib off. Having the hoist short helped lower the center of effort and required less ease in puffs and made a wide groove to drive the boat in. We took the idea after being around the America's Cup catamarans and it was just a no brainer to apply it to the 14s. That being said, we struggled to keep the boat powered up in less breeze with the short jib, so having the big AP jib was crucial for those marginal days. The AP jib is also a square top, which again I think is crucial in helping the sail twist. I think its extremely important to not close off the slot and when you can match twist profiles between then main and the jib you are doing really well, and the square top really helps in that department.

-Any new advancements in materials or build techniques you are using?

There hasn't been to many advancements in materials, especially in small paneled sails. The material we use is the best product out there. As far build techniques go, it's always being improved upon. I am always looking at previous sails I built and figuring out where I can save some weight and where I need to increase strength and chafe resistance.

-How do we contact you for more information?

Feel free to email me at mikeyradz@gmail.com