

Shopping for a used Soling

A used Soling is a good value for use in small boat racing competition. The Soling's construction is simple; it is made out of single skin glass reinforced polyester resin, there is no balsa core to rot. The boat is easy to maintain and offers a long and competitive life in the club racing circuit. If the boat was dry-sailed, the hull seldom develops lamination problems. When you purchase a boat from an active competitor, you will usually find the boat well kept, and comes with a good supply of sails and spare parts.

Some of the things to watch out for in a used Soling:

It has been 30 years since the first Soling sailed. The design has endured the test of time; only one major change was made to the boat -- the addition of the cockpit sole. The other changes are of evolutionary in nature -- in the choice of material or rigging methods. Some of these changes are class rule specific. (see "History" at ISA site.)

This is not a guide for rule compliance, nor a guide for boat valuation. This is only a collection of tidbits on what you should pay attention to when shopping for an used Soling.

Floor -- The cockpit sole was added to the class rules in 1970. About 15% of the boats were built with no floors. Some of these boats have since been retro-fitted at the factory or by the owners. However there are still a small number of floorless boats in existence.

Bulkhead covers -- Current class rules require screwed-in bulkhead covers with inspection ports. You should make sure this safety related upgrade has been installed.

Compression post -- The evolution has seen the material changed from wood to fiberglass to aluminum; you will also find the top competitive boats use titanium. While most boats have aluminum posts, fiberglass posts have provided good service to many sailors. When shopping for a boat, you should check for cracks and alignments.

Mast -- Old Solings come with a gold colored mast made by Proctor. This mast is stiff and strong, but requires a lot of effort to bend. The newer and more manageable masts are built by Abbott.

Bailers -- 4 self-bailers are permitted by current class rules. Some of the older boats may only have 2 bailers, or no bailers at all.

Sail inventory -- Old class rules allow more sails onboard than the current rules. The Soling sailors used to carry 7 sails to a race -- 2 main sails, 2 jibs, and 3 spinnakers. Current class rules permit only 5 sails -- 1 main sail, 2 jibs, a large and a small spinnaker. You will find older boats may come with an extensive sail inventory. Some of these sails, although no longer suitable for class competition, are still good for club racing purposes.

Shroud adjustments come in 4 basic varieties. You will find all four types are still in use today.

1. The original Elvstrom design has the turnbuckles attached to movable cars running on a track bolted to the deck.

2. In 1972 Buddy Melges redesigned the deck layout for his Olympic campaign. He removed the track from the topside and fed the shrouds through the deck to adjustable turnbuckles below.

3. The design has since evolved back to above deck hardware, but this time the shrouds are connected to a single car with the track mounted on a ram. This allows the shroud tension to tighten further when the car is moved aft.

4. The next reincarnation has the upper and lower shrouds on separate rams, so that you can adjust the shroud tensions independently.

Adjustable jib tack -- You may install an adjustable jib tack on your Soling to change the angle from which the upper shroud pulls down on the mast, which allows you to exercise finer control of the jib sail shape.