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You have just purchased your Maricat and are cracking your neck to get down to the water and fly a hull. Well, just wait a minute or two and read these few pages. You're an Expert — don't need to know — well, read it all anyway, just for a laugh.

All good sailors check their craft before leaving the shore. Check bolts and screws for tightness. With a shackle key, go over the boat the tighten all shackles and clevis pins (shackle screws). Are the bungs in and tight? Will the tiller extension fall off? Are the rudder pintle pins secured with a split pin? How about the screws holding the cleats on the mainsheet block? Sure, some guy in the factory should have done all that and the dealer should have checked it as well — but THEY don't have to swim home, do they?

Check that the dolphin striker cable is tight. (This is that wire thing under the front beam). To tighten it up, you can adjust the screw on the casting, or, if this is not enough — undo one of the inside front beam bolts and pull the cable right out. When it is out, you can wind the cable up a few turns which has the effect of shortening it. Re-assemble the wire, replace the bolt and jump the wire into the dolphin striker casting. If it is still loose, take it back to the dealer.

The only assembly you should need to do is to put the battens in the sail, thread up the mainsheet and attach the sail to the boom. Lay out the sail on the grass (sand is bad for a sail; the road is bloody awful), and put the battens in to the relative pockets. The thin tip goes in first and the end with a hole sticks out of the sail. Both ends of the batten tie (string to you) go through the hole in the batten, then one end goes through the other eyelet in the sail. Both ends are then tied in a reef knot. The tension on the batten should be just sufficient to pull the wrinkles out of the sail, and no more.

Lay the boom alongside the sail and attach both ends to the holes (cringles) in the bottom (foot) of the sail. Finally, thread the mainsheet (that big chunk of rope) through the blocks. The sheet is attached to a small block and should go from there through the front of the triple block on the boom, through the small pulley, through the front of the triple block again, in the back of the main block, through the triple block again and, finally, through the main block at the bottom and out the front and through the cleats. Tie a knot in the end of the sheet to prevent

the whole mess unravelling on the water. The bottom of the mainsheet block should have a swivelling action. Sometimes, the blocks are supplied with a little square gadget to prevent the block swivelling. Chuck this gadget away.

This entire assembly of sail, battens, boom and mainsheet can be rolled up (from the top of the sail down — not up), taking care to keep the battens straight. This need never be pulled apart again — just stick the whole lot in the sail bag and it's ready for next time.

Let's go sailing! Get the boat off the trailer and onto the beach. Point the boat into the wind and with the bow higher than the stern, if possible. Lay the mast out in front of the boat with the base of the mast near the front beam. Connect the shrouds (they're not called side stays) and forestays to the mast at the hounds fitting. The forestays, which are the long wires with snap shackles attached, should be in the centre of the shackle and the shrouds on the outside. The shackle pin goes through the hole in the hounds fitting.

Before you put your mast up, always look around for overhead wires — they tend to melt masts (which can be replaced) and fry skippers (which are more difficult to fix).

Snap the forestays onto the saddles on the bows (pointy ends) of the boat. Dig the bottom of the mast into the sand, or have that bloke on the beach put his foot against the end and stand the mast up. Don't look up — you usually think the mast is falling, and it does! When you have it balanced, lift it up, put the mast into the mast step, and lean it back against the forestays. That other bloke on the beach can then attach the shrouds to the chain plates (those silvery things on the side of the hulls). Don't worry about getting them tight.

Unroll the sail and attach the halyard (the uncovered wire on the mast) to the head of the sail. Feed the sail into the mast and pull it up with that chunk of rope attached to the halyard. The gooseneck (that funny-looking thing on the end of the boom) is also slid into the mast. When the sail is right up to the top of the mast, the halyard is locked into place. There is a little copper lump in the wire about a foot from the sail end. This has to be fed into the halyard lock on the front of the mast and about 2 inches down from the top. In this way, the halyard is only under tension for about a foot of its length. If this is not done correctly, the mast may break. The other end of the halyard is clipped into the halyard lock about a foot up from the base of the mast. (This is just to keep the halyard from flapping in the breeze — there should be no tension on it). Untie the rope, uphaul and put it in your locker (not in the car).

The boom has three block-and-tackle systems attached to it. These are downhaul at the front of the boom, vang near the middle and mainsheet near the back end of the boom. These are connected as follows:- Vang to the U-shaped thing near the base of the mast; Downhaul to the U-shaped thing just above it; and, Mainsheet to the traveller car (that thing that slides easily just behind the back beam.

The boat is now ready to sail, but you're not yet ready to sail it! Tip the boat over on its side, resting the mast tip on the sand. This is pretty much what the boat will look like when you pickle it. What to do? First, swim the top of the mast around into the wind. (Don't do all of this on the beach, of course). Then, check that the mainsheet is uncleated. Climb up on the bottom hull, just back from the front beam (not on the beach — it's not made for that), and check out that magic righting rope. Grab the plastic tube in one hand and the other strand of rope in the other hand. Pull out first one then the other until you can lean well out and pull the boat up. Just hold both ropes with both hands when you have enough rope out — this will stop the rope lengthening any more. If it doesn't come up, you are either under nine stone, or not leaning out far enough, or haven't swum the mast into wind, or haven't uncleated the sheet.

When the boat starts to come back up, let go the righting rope, dive for the bottom hull and grab the dolphin striker wire. This will keep the boat from going straight over the other way; and, also, to make sure you don't end up swimming after your NEW toy. Climb aboard over the front of one of the hulls.

If you're a real dill, and didn't swim the mast around into wind quickly enough, the boat may turtle or go mast down. If this happens, go to the windward hull and grab the plastic tube; then go to the leeward stern and pull while standing as far back on the gunwale (that rubber bumper bar thing) as possible. The nose will SLOWLY come up and you can SLOWLY move forward until you are in a normal "on-the-side" position. Then, pull the boat up as before. A word of caution — the boat is not made to be sailed upside down and is, therefore, at its most vulnerable to damage. Don't just jump around on the tramp. Treat her with care, like a mistress; not roughly like a wife!

O.K. — pull the boat upright, and go sailing.

"Hey! — Where's your paddle, and life jacket?" Our olympic sailors need them, and so do you.

Before you go, you can tighten up the rigging. Pull the nose out of the wind a bit until the boom is laying almost across the boat. Get that bloke on the beach to pull down on the end of the boom and you can then tighten that shroud. Pull the boat around the other way and do up the other shroud.

H A P P Y S A I L I N G ! ! !
