

Anticipating anchoring

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JEFF MERRILL

The freedom to explore remote cruising grounds and to anchor out overnight or for days at a time is one of the great attractions of the trawler lifestyle. Understanding how your ground

which goes into great detail on a number of theoretical aspects and practical applications for a variety of situations. Over time voyagers generally develop techniques for setting their anchor,

breaking it loose and securely stowing the ground tackle while underway — practice, fine-tune and keep learning.

There are many factors involved in selecting a safe place to drop the hook — wind, tide, currents, other boats, etc. You

Let's presume that the windlass (horizontal or vertical) and anchor (so many variations) have already been selected and installed on your trawler and are appropriately sized to provide you with sufficient holding strength. With this article I'd like to share some common sense techniques you can adapt to your trawler that will improve your comfort level and to help you "dial-in" your anchoring routine. Be sure that the connection between your anchor and chain (swivel with Loctite or shackles with seizing wire on the pins) is secure so it can't disconnect.



Above, an anchor bridle setup evenly distributes the load. Right, an anchor keeper made from StarBoard keeps the anchor firmly in place.

tackle connects your floating palace to the sea floor and being properly prepared will give you more confidence to visit new locations and provide greater peace of mind when you drift off to sleep, knowing that you will not drift away from where you dropped the hook.

The best book I have read on anchoring is by Earl R. Hinz, "The Complete Book of Anchoring and Mooring,"



need to let out enough rode to have the proper scope ratio for the water depth and to allow for a swing circle. The key is to be prepared for an unexpected, urgent situation that requires you to break away at an inopportune time.

Securing the anchor

It is vitally important that your anchor, when raised and stowed on its roller, is secure in place and not free to wobble around. Most trawler owners snug the anchor up with a chain stopper or a snubber that is attached to the anchor shank and then made fast to a pad-eye or cleat on the foredeck. This takes the load off the windlass and prevents the anchor from launching prematurely, but your anchor

can usually still shift from side to side. Most rollers are channeled in the center to help guide the chain, but this notch in the roller is rarely honed to seat the anchor shank. You can have your roller modified and widen the groove to create a better fit, but another simple solution is to fabricate a “keeper” that will straddle the shank top and hold your anchor firmly in place. I’ve seen several trawler owners make such a keeper with StarBoard (a high density polyethylene) that fits over the top and is then pinned or wedged into place, it is also a good idea to attach a small leash to the keeper so that

it won’t go overboard when it is removed.

Chain stoppers typically have a metal flap that locks down to pin a link of chain; this keeps the anchor taut on the roller and also allows you to relax the chain between the windlass and the stopper. It is a wise practice to only load up the windlass when in use. Shock load — whether the anchor is up on the roller or set in the mud — can damage your windlass so you need to be able to isolate the pressure and only use your windlass for up and down operations.

I like to suggest to my clients



Marking your chain at various lengths lets you know how much you’ve deployed. Above is a plate in the pilothouse that reminds crewmembers of the code.

that at the beginning of every season they lower their anchor to the dock (carefully) and then slowly pay out all of the rode to clear out the chain locker (over time these chambers cake with foul smelling

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mud, salt, silt and sand build up). Doing this will also remind you that you should have a length of line tied by a bowline knot to the last link (the bitter end) of chain and connecting to a padeye in your chain locker bulkhead. This is a “cutaway” line that needs to be long enough to let the chain come out forward of the windlass on deck. There may be a rare occasion where you need to dump (abandon) your anchor if you are too close to harm and your anchor is stuck or your windlass has lost power — trying to unshackle the bitter end down in the chain locker during an adrenaline rush is not very easy. Having a buoy and 100 feet of polypropylene (floating) line that you can tie off

can wash out the chain locker and then re-flake the chain so that it is untangled, evenly distributed and will not ball up. Most chain lockers have a lot of “air” above the chain once it has been settled in place. When you are going on a long trip this is a great place to stow your hull fenders so that they keep the chain pressed low and minimize it from bouncing around and getting knotted (if you have never had to undo a balled-up chain, it is a slinky and slippery process that will take

ucts (paint, zip ties, tape, inserts and shrink rubber). I prefer Rustoleum paint (it will typically last for two seasons before needing to be reapplied).

Same with color-coding systems — lots of choices, red/white/blue like the U.S. flag or red/yellow/green like a traffic light, pick one that is easy for you to remember and then summarize it and display the color/length scheme in your pilothouse for quick reference.

Personally, I like to use the

color red at the (100s) hundred intervals. So to mark 200 feet I’d paint (use a degreaser to remove rust, salt and dirt on those links for better paint adhesion) 18 inches of red at 198 feet, leave an 18-inch gap and then paint another 18 inches of red at 201

feet (it doesn’t have to be precise, it’s a reference) so that when I’m looking at the chain going over the roller, I can see two distinct bands of red to indicate 200 feet. If you paint 18 inches of bright orange on the chain that shows on the roller when your anchor reaches the surface you also have an easily recognized alert that you are almost all the way up. Some trawler owners use cable ties (leave the tails on) in addition to paint so that they have a reference that they can see better in low light.

Setting up a bridle

When you find a place to anchor



Left, a properly installed bow eye can be used to lower your scope when anchoring. Above, a chain stopper takes the load of the anchor and allows you to slack the chain on the windlass to avoid shock loads that can damage it.

much longer than you would expect!).

Rinse off the chain on the dock and then stretch it out in 25-foot or 50-foot lengths to mark the various intervals with paint in 18-inch-long color-coded segments. There are a number of choices for chain marking prod-

to the bitter end before cutting loose will make your later retrieval of the anchor easier (remember to log the coordinates with your GPS or man-overboard button on your plotter).

Even distribution

With the chain on the dock you

for an extended stay and have set the hook firmly, you should then set up a bridle. The key is to take the load off your windlass, but still be ready to bring the chain up at a moment's notice. Some trawler owners will buy a chain hook or claw that snags a link of chain and is attached to a bow cleat (through a hawsehole) via a length of line. Others buy or fabricate a bridle (like a horse rein) that connects two pieces of line (one cleated off to port the other to starboard) to the chain via a hook or claw. The bridles are a bit more work to set up, but have the advantage of

more evenly distributing the load and keeping the bow centered into the wind.

One last tip, a good "bow tow eye" mounted about 12 inches above the waterline and properly backed and reinforced in the stem will allow you to rig a line that can be used to lower your scope for anchoring (and you should measure the height from the waterline to your anchor roller and record this fact to help determine scope) or deploying a sea anchor in rough seas, more long range trawlers are installing these for added versatility.

Good luck and aweigh you go! ■

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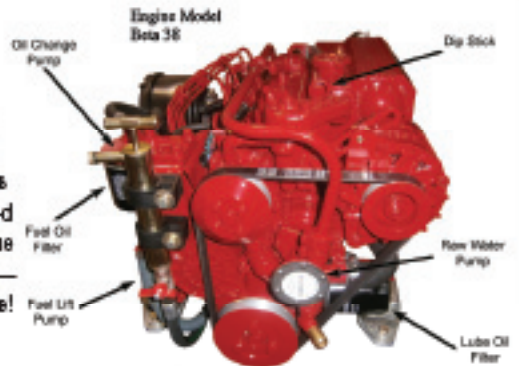
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Beta 30	Crestline 52
Beta 35	Island Packet 37
Beta 38	Passport 40/44
Beta 40	Allegro 35
Beta 42	Allegro 41 44
Beta 45	Allegro 47
Beta 48	Passport 55

Engine Model	Year of
Beta 50	Catalina 40
Beta 55	Boston Whaler
Beta 60	Whitfoot 37
Beta 65	Whitfoot 42
Beta 70	Hunter 480
Beta 75	Whitfoot 46
Beta 80	Whitfoot 41.1
Beta 85	Allegro 48 51
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