



**CO32 TECHNICAL
PAPER**

SETTING UP THE KICKER / VANG

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The original vang as supplied new, was a wire strop with a rope tackle and a jamb cleat arrangement. This was not powerful enough to put enough tension on to power up a mainsail on a power reach nor was it possible to support the boom to keep it off the guard rails when putting in or shaking out a slab reef.

The gas/sprung tubular strut type kicker has lots to commend it. The tensioning of the strut should have at least a 12:1 tackle, preferably 16:1. Yes, I do mean 12:1, not all mainsheet trimmers are 15 stoners. The control of the vang tension wants to be adjusted quickly, efficiently and often.

The kicker tail should be double ended and led out from the base of the mast to cam jammers either side of the after end of the saloon roof at the side of the cockpit hatch, handy for the mainsheet crew member. The operation should be such that adjustment of the kicker can be achieved quickly with one hand even when heavily loaded.

Maintaining control of the boat in heavy weather when the mainsheet is down the track and fully let off by releasing the vang to de-power the main is not something every racing crew appreciates. The ability to do this quickly before the boat heels and starts to broach will pay dividends. As soon as the puff has passed, the vang must have enough purchase to enable tension to be quickly reapplied. In breezy conditions the vang is almost like a throttle as well as the safety valve.

It is worth also noting that with the ability to have a really tight kicker that care should be exercised not overstress the boom. A useful addition is to cover the whole kicker strut and tackle with an open ended sock. Your local sailmaker can make it of off-cuts of mylar or kevlar sailcloth made of rectangular shape with Velcro on the two long edges and folded over the vang as a tube. The benefit is that it keeps the spinnaker from being snagged on a kite drop on the kicker as it is hauled in under the boom. It also stops hands and hair getting snagged in the vang tackles.