

Class or CCA Battens

Special points of interest:

- **Class rules generally control batten length.**
- **Ocean racing rules generally no longer penalize batten length and allow up to six battens.**
- **Extra batten length costs more and can increase the need for sail maintenance.**
- **Longer battens, however, can extend the useful life of sails.**

Battens are used in sails to increase the effectiveness of sail area. Indeed, mainsail roaches can be rounded and supported with battens to add up to 8 percent of so of extra area beyond the basic sail triangle. In Jibsails extra area supported by battens is possible except when the sail overlaps the mast — in that case batten breakage and chafe problems hardly justify the extra area.

As might be expected, any option which stands to give advantage on the race course must be controlled or it will be carried to an extreme with resulting consequences for the seaworthiness of the rig. Battens, for example might be increased in length to the point where breakage and chafe become serious concerns.

Thus most one design classes and ocean racing rules until recently have limited batten length. The standard for ocean racing for years has been the rule imposed by the Cruising Club of America (CCA). The CCA rule is no longer in use, but it is still widely adhered to and almost universally applied in one design class rules. It limits the number of mainsail battens to 4 — the center two 12 percent of the foot of the sail plus 12 inches and the top and bottom 10 percent of the sail foot plus 12 inches.

Recently the Realization that longer battens can be retrofitted to old sails in order to correct the crease that forms in front of shorter battens as the cloth softens with use has led rule makers to limit the number of mainsail battens minimally — to

6 of any length (including full length). This is the case with the IMS and PHRF rules which are currently popular.

Even so, class rules are still in effect to limit batten length and number. And though the ocean racing rules may no longer enforce such limits, the old limits are quite commonly followed because they serve quite well. They result in sails that set well with controllable roach area. In other words, these sails are “seaworthy”.

Mainsail and Working Jib Illustrating “Class and CCA” Battens