



## Getting Fit

Sailing is a complex sport with multiple factors influencing performance. In addition to the essential high level sailing ability, sailors must also have sufficient levels of physical fitness. While different boat classes and even sailors within classes have vastly different physical requirements, a solid level of fitness is extremely important to success for many reasons.

### **What does “fit” mean and why is fitness important?**

Fitness is a combination of many factors, such as aerobic endurance, anaerobic capacity, speed, agility, strength etc. All of these attributes are at one time or another important for optimal sailing performance and success. Underlying all of these attributes is aerobic endurance, as it is the glue that holds your fitness together. Sailing is an endurance sport, with races lasting up to 1 hour in duration. Additionally, you may compete in as many as 3 races in a given day, meaning you have to back up your performance race after race and may be on the water for as long as 8 hours a day. You then have to sail for the duration of the regatta, which may be up to 7 days. So while fitness is of varying degrees of importance during actual racing depending on your boat class and position, it is also extremely important in being able to recover quickly enough to back up multiple races each day and throughout the course of a long regatta.

Having a high level of fitness has several benefits. It allows you to compete at a given workload for a lower level of effort; or conversely at a higher workload for the same level of effort. It also allows you to be more mentally fresh to concentrate better and make smarter decisions throughout the course of a regatta.

### **How fit is fit enough?**

This depends on which boat class you compete in, and whether you are a skipper or a crew. Boat classes such as the Laser, Laser Radial, Finn and RS:X are very physical classes and therefore require very high levels of fitness. Crews on double handed boats such as Skiffs (49er and 49er FX) and 470's also require good levels of fitness. While generally speaking, skippers have a less physical role on the boat, high levels of fitness may be required in windy conditions, and therefore you should be prepared for the most difficult conditions. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the fitter you are, the faster you recover between races and days, meaning you are fresher physically and able to concentrate better throughout the course of a long regatta.

### **Achieving and maintaining optimal body weight**

Most boat classes have a desired weight range that is associated with optimal performance. While achieving and maintaining your optimal body weight is primarily achieved with the right nutrition plan, consistent training can also play an important role in this process.