



*The Winchmate system offers two types of line-grabbing jaws: fixed and spring loaded. Testers gave high marks to both after a year in the field.*

## FIELD TEST

With the Winchmate set up on the primary Barlow 28s aboard PS Technical Editor Ralph Naranjo's Ericson 41, *Wind Shadow*, we tested the operational advantages of the self-tailing gear. Using the winches for genoa trimming and spinnaker sheet and guy hauling, we found the system to be as user-friendly as any standalone self-tailers on the market today. Over the year that we have been testing both the fixed and spring-loaded products, we

have not had to make any modifications to the installation.

We initially protected the exposed aluminum threads with CRC corrosion block spray; after a year, there are no signs of deterioration. The anodizing is holding up well. Of the two line-locking systems we installed, we found that the spring jaw definitely provides a more aggressive hold, but the fixed jaw, with its wedge type line fit, is so easy and convenient to release that we are hard-pressed to favor one over the other. Both get high marks from testers.

In the final tally, we looked at the list prices per Winchmate unit—\$549 for fixed and \$599 for spring jaw—and compared them to the \$2,000 average cost of replacing the Barlow and Barient 28s (plus installation). It seems fair to say that for those with well-maintained Barient and Barlow winches (size 27-32), a 25-percent to 30-percent self-tailer retrofit is worth the investment. ▲

# Winch Makeover

## Winchmate makes self-tailers of old deck gear.

The Winchmate is one answer for sailors who are considering upgrading to self-tailing winches but find the price tag too intimidating and have otherwise perfectly functional non-self-tailing winches that are too good to toss out. Now there's another option: Older Barient or Barlow winches can be retrofitted with a carefully machined upper drum assembly that adds a rugged and reliable self-tailing feature.

To test the concept, we retrofitted a set of near museum-aged Barlow two-speed 28s with the easy-to-install Winchmate system. Combining the upgrade with normal annual cleaning and maintenance makes the changeover quite simple and straightforward. The process can be "e-assisted" with Winchmate's step-by-step online installation video.

With the drum removed and bearings, gears, and pawls cleaned, greased and re-assembled, a spindle extender is threaded to the top of the winch spindle. A Delrin spindle extension bushing is added, and at-

tention is then turned to the drum itself.

The system designer has come up with two types of line-grabbing jaws, either a fixed version or a spring-lock option, and we have tested both. These systems mate like hand and glove to the top of the existing drum and are held in place by a clever counter-clockwise threaded lip and capture ring that is hand-tightened in place. The feed jaw is positioned with a winch handle drive extension, and all is held in place by a chrome drum nut tightened with a simple two-point spanner wrench.

Be very careful not to cross thread either the spindle extension or the drum nut during the installation. Each of these components should initially turn with only finger pressure. If either starts to bind before any surfaces mate, unthread, and re-try, taking care to match the threads with as parallel a start as possible. During the drum and line stripper installation, a provided spacer may be needed to allow adequate clearance.

Photo by Ralph Naranjo

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