

MAINSAIL SOLUTIONS

Given the range of mainsails on the market, comparing pros and cons of the various mainsail handling systems is by no means cut-and-dry. Some systems are better suited for specific mainsail designs or size boats. And within some generic types—such as the lazy jack and stack-cover arrangement—there are slight modifications that suit certain boats or circumstances.

The accompanying table is based largely on experience of our many field testers and contributors. Generally, the baseline ratings apply to a modern sloop in the mid-30-foot range. To

more closely quantify the differences in generic designs, our testers also compared two different mainsail handling systems on two nearly identical 40-foot production monohulls. One boat was equipped with the Dutchman system, another

was fitted with a cover/lazy jack combo. In terms of hoisting, reefing, and dousing, the Dutchman scored highest overall. However, for boats over 40 feet, or in the case of a deep roach, full-batten mainsail, such as that found on a multihull, the scale can tilt in favor of other lazy-jack/cover type options.

| PS | BUYER'S GUIDE | | MAINSAIL HANDLING SYSTEMS | | |
|----------|---------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------|------|
| | DUTCHMAN | LAZY JACKS | STACK PACK | STACK COVER | NONE |
| HOISTING | A | B | B | B | B+ |
| SAILING | B+ | B | B- | B- | A |
| REEFING | A | B | B | B | C |
| DOUSING | A | B | B+ | B+ | D |
| COVERING | B- | C | A | A | B |

TRYSAIL TIP

Of all the details involved in choosing and fitting a mainsail handling system, one that is often overlooked is how to accommodate a storm sail. The trysail's dedicated luff track often begins on the mast below the boom so the sail can be kept on deck ready for deployment. Fixed lines in some

mainsail handling systems will cross the trysail track, preventing a trysail from being easily hoisted. In such cases, the control lines should be easy to disconnect and, if necessary, stowed securely (usually along the mast or boom), allowing the trysail to freely set.