



*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.*

nance 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 reassembled, a spindle extender is threaded to the top of the winch spindle. A Delrin spindle extension bushing is added, and attention 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.

*Continued on page 31*

Photo by Ralph Naranjo

## 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 Bari-ent 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 mainte-

## Synergy Dock Line Stands Up in Tests

*Polyester braid with an integral snubber conveniently absorbs shock.*



*The Synergy lines (being marked for measurement here) began stretching at loads less than 10 pounds and did not deform under loads of 900 pounds.*

In July 2008, *Practical Sailor* looked at products for docking, anchoring, or mooring in a storm. Among those mentioned was the Synergy docking line, an abrasion-resistant polyester braid with a short length of industrial-grade rubber in the core. Synergy also makes a stretchy, floating tow-rope for dinghies.

We put Synergy dock lines into use for six months on a fixed dock and during a two-week Mississippi River delivery cruise. They held up as well as similar braided lines and proved to be more convenient to use than its nearest comparison, a dock line with a rubber snubber. One drawback noted was that the woven cover was more prone to snagging than more tightly braided lines.

In controlled tests, *PS* applied a 900-pound load to a 10-foot long, half-inch

Synergy line (\$42.50) and observed about 15 inches of stretch. The line, which has a 9-inch length of rubber in the core, began visibly stretching at loads of about 10 pounds but returned to its original length once the load was released.

We will add the line to an upcoming line-abrasion test. For now, our preferred choice for most docking and mooring duties is good quality, three-strand nylon with chafe gear, a tough team to beat. Check out our used rope endurance test at [www.practical-sailor.com/marine/used-nylon-rope-endurance-test.html](http://www.practical-sailor.com/marine/used-nylon-rope-endurance-test.html). ▲

### CONTACT

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Continued from page 30

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.

## 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. ▲

## CONTACT

**WINCHMATE**  
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□ **JUNE 2009:** Refrigeration Conversion Kits; Handheld GPS Update; Raymarine A50D; Tillerpilots Field Test; Rope Clutches Update; Heavy-weather Sails for Furling; PS Advisor: Fouling fix for the waterline

□ **MAY 2009:** Exterior Wood Finish Six-month Checkup; Practically Green: Belowdecks; Ratchet Blocks Test; Wind Gen Field Test; Handsfree Onboard Communication; Ocean Tested: Tethers; Chandlery: Inflatable Hobie i12s; PS Advisor: Boat buying in a down market

□ **APRIL 2009:** Affordable Dream Boats; Entry-level Fixed and Handheld VHF's; Digital Thermostat for Galley Fridges; Nesting Cookware Test; Rust Busters; Chandlery: Flow-Rite Pro Fill, Big Kahuna shower, Fresh Flush Gas Watch, Fender Cleat, Chafe-Pro, Wrino Hook, Leatherman LEDs, Great Neck tools, Bionic Wrench; PS Advisor: Group Calls on DSC-capable VHF's

□ **MARCH 2009:** Maintenance Special: Bottom Paint 2009, Vinyl Window Restorers, Stripping Barrier Coats; Rope Clutch Test; 9.9 Outboard Shootout; Chandlery: Dry Suits; PS Advisor: Sail Shape

□ **FEBRUARY 2009:** Heavy-weather Sailing: Drogues sea trialed; Boat Design: Comfort vs. Speed; Mid-priced Fixed VHF's; Paste waxes; Alado Jib Furler; Chandlery: Firts-aid products; PS Advisor: Sea anchor sizing

□ **JANUARY 2009:** Boat Review: Trophy Daysailers; Interior LEDs test; 5Mile Wi-Fi Test Run; Seasick Medications; Small Stoves Update: CookMate; Mildew Stain Removers; Chandlery: Book Reviews; PS Advisor: Water-logged Rudder

□ **DECEMBER 2008:** Gear of the Year; New Handheld GPS Units; Medical Kits: Bluewater Crusiers; Skip Allan's Farewell to Wildflower; Heavyweight Anchors Test; Ocean Tested: Honda genset, EarthNC software; PS Advisor: Wood finish for cabin sole

□ **NOVEMBER 2008:** Boat Review: e-33; Ethanol Additives Test; Raymarine AIS250 Review; Emergency Tillers of the Day; Cold-weather Gloves Test; Heavyweight Anchors by Manson and Rocna Test; Chandlery: UK Water-tight Box, Boye Basic 3 Cobalt Knife, Redi-Edge Sharpener; PS Advisor: Antifouling for Inflatables

□ **OCTOBER 2008:** Bottom Paint Test; Folding-transom Rigid Inflatable Boats test; 5-inch Plotter-sounders Test; Ocean Tested: Wet-cell Batteries; Teak Caulk Test; Trends in Windlasses; Chandlery: Original Nantucket Diddy Bag, Wera Tools; PS Advisor: Search for a DC-DC Converter

□ **SEPTEMBER 2008:** Electric Propulsion; Medical Kits III: Offshore kits; Performance Sailing Gloves; SPOT satellite personal messenger; Acrylic Coatings for Fiberglass (Gelcoat restorers); Large Ice Chest Test; Chandlery: SteriPEN; PS Advisor: Marine plywood vs. regular plywood

□ **AUGUST 2008:** Navy 44 MkII; Inflatable PFDs with Harnesses; Garmin vs. Raymarine chartplotter head-to-head; Topside Paints Test; Catalina 22 refit report; Storm Trysails; Snatch Blocks Update: Ronstan Blocks; Chandlery: Boatsense boat alarm; PS Advisor: Painting Your Deck

□ **JULY 2008:** 10-foot Rigid Inflatable Dinghy Shootout; Safety and Electronics for the Singlehander; Standard Horizon CPV550 review; Foul-weather Gear for Women; Inflatable Fenders; Mooring Chain Test Finale; Chandlery: Summer reading list, Walker Bay Airis inflatable kayak, Crocs kneepads; PS Advisor: Troubleshooting AC units

□ **JUNE 2008:** Singlehanded Sailing Part 1; New Inflatable PFDs without Harnesses; Flir Thermal-imaging Camera Review; Aftermarket Bowsprit Kits; Baseball-cap Style Hat Test; Medical Kits for Coastal Cruisers; 12-volt Inflators; Chandlery: Natrapel bug spray, Freezer Safe fridge thermometer, West System G-Flex epoxy kit, power tools for restoring gelcoat

□ **MAY 2008:** Weta multihull; Practically Green: 'Green' Maintenance products for boaters; Aussie Barbecue Grills; MOB alarms and direction-finding devices; Internal Holding Tank Sensors; Collimate vs. Meguiar's topsides wax; Headlamp Test; Chandlery: Norcross Hawkkey handheld depth sounder

□ **APRIL 2008:** Beneteau 46; Forward-looking Sonar; Medical Kits for Small Boat Sailors; Updating Digital Charts; Exterior Wood Coatings Test: Teak Oils; 12-volt Cabin Fans; Paint Stripper Redux; Chandlery: Whirley Bird, FiveFingers, Steer-iT tiller tool

□ **MARCH 2008:** Etap 28s; Furlers for Light-air Sails; Walker Bay Tubes on Rigid Dinghy; Bi-annual Bottom Paint Test; Teak Cleaners Test; Inflatable Boat Cleaners; Chandlery: Rydlyme vs. MaryKate On&Off

□ **FEBRUARY 2008:** 30-foot Classics Under \$20,000 (Tartan 30, Pearson 30, Catalina 30); Mainsail Handling Systems; Men's Foul Weather Gear Test; Holding Tank Gauges; Hand-bearing Compasses; 'Master and Commander' Review; Chandlery: A METS Recap

□ **JANUARY 2008:** Shannon 37 and 38; Special Report: Navigation Basics; Anchor Test Update; Raritan vs. Jabsco marine heads; VHF External Speakers; Trailer Jacks Test; Navigation Software; Chandlery: Xantrex battery products

□ **DECEMBER 2007:** Gear of the Year 2007; Exterior Wood Coatings: Two-part varnishes; Flashlight Test; Special Report: Nylon Lines; Riding Sails; Winter Reads; Walker Bay Genesis Review; Chandlery: Port-o-Flush, boat show update, and Slam Waterproof Laptop Pack

□ **NOVEMBER 2007:** Hanse 400; Remote VHF Mics; Torqueedo Electric Outboard Review; Radar-reflective Tape Myth Buster; Hull Cleaners Test; Power Tools for Cruising; Bottom Paint and Wax Field Test Results; Chandlery: Multitools, LED lights, Dax OneTouch winch handle, and Bridgenorth Bailer

□ **OCTOBER 2007:** TomCat 9.7; Semi-annual Bottom Paint test; Cheap Charting Software; Exterior Wood Coatings: Synthetics and Stains; Special Report: Core Materials; Flexible Water Tanks; Chandlery: Velocitek and Cruising Solutions headset

□ **SEPTEMBER 2007:** Sydney 36CR; Outboard Brackets Test; Cruising Software: Offshore Essentials; High-tech Rigging Review; Standard Horizon CPV350 Evaluation; Dock Cart Test; Anti-corrosion Sprays; Chandlery: Solar Stik solar panel and mounts

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