

# Tiller Taming with Two Fingers

*TillerClutch takes a familiar approach to locking the tiller in place.*

During the past decade, *Practical Sailor* has looked at a number of devices designed to hold the tiller while the helmsman can attend to other important business—such as trimming a jib sheet or popping open a frosty cold beverage.

There's the Davis Tiller-Tamer (Oct. 1, 1992), the Tillerstay (April 15, 1997), the Tillermate (April 1, 2005), and the Steer-iT (April 1, 2008). Except for the Steer-iT, all of these systems involve some form of line-clutch device on the tiller. The clutch "grabs" an athwartship line that passes through it. The line then leads back to cam (or clam) cleats on either side of the tiller that can be used to tension or release the line.

When the right amount of friction is applied, the clutch will lock the tiller in place, yet still allow the helmsman to adjust the helm by simply pushing the

tiller to port or starboard. There is no need to adjust the clutch itself, unless the amount of weather helm increases significantly. The Steer-iT replaces line with a solid acetal plastic rod that extends to one side of the tiller

The latest device to tackle this task, the TillerClutch, is what *PS* calls a tiller brake. Using a lever-activated cam to grip the line, the device improves upon a similar braking device *PS* tested in 1992 called the Tiller Lock.

(The Tiller Lock, it seems, is no longer available). Made of milled anodized aluminum and stainless steel, the TillerClutch closely resembles a conventional rope clutch. A flick of the locking lever engages the clutch, and a light touch on the lever releases pressure so that the tiller's position can be adjusted, as needed. Al-

though you can't simply push or pull the tiller to tweak the amount of helm (as you can do with other clutches), the lever requires just two fingers to release for adjustment, and to reset.

Because the TillerClutch's principal components are galvanic enemies, aluminum and stainless steel, we are interested in how well it will hold up in the saltwater environment. The unit is covered by a lifetime warranty, but a regular freshwater rinse will go a long way toward warding off any corrosion issues. We will be installing the device on one of our Florida test boats this winter and will report any findings. Made by WaveFront Marine, the Tiller Clutch costs \$70; a pair of fairleads and cam cleats to complete the installation add another \$8. ▲



TillerClutch

## CONTACT

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