

## ***Overhauling Plastimo furling genoa kit – or why my furling gear runs so sweetly***

My decision to replace the aged standing rigging on Funadama necessitated dismantling the furling genoa mechanism to extract the forestay. The Plastimo 608S gear, which I had installed in 2001, came apart quite readily with some help from a friend. The various bits were lying on my workshop bench when another friend appeared – Colin Shead.

Not content, in the first place, with having suggested that replacement of the rigging might be wise, he then looked at the drum and top swivel and made some comment to the effect “I assume you will be checking the bearings...” Inwardly, I groaned, but answered “of course”.

The top swivel had a screw ring which, when undone, allowed easy access to two caged ball races – and two rubber (neoprene?) seals top and bottom. Cleaning the various pieces and then re-greasing the two races was straightforward, and I then turned to the drum mechanism. The sound of the bearings in it was dry and clattery, which suggested an absence of grease.

The two chain plates were removed from the bottom of the drum (the four bolts are captive) and the two halves of the drum cage were removed by releasing the two pinch bolts. All that was now holding the two halves of the drum together were the four long vertical bolts. These I cautiously removed, and even more cautiously, separated the top half of the drum from the bottom. It was as well that I did this over my workbench, because the next thing I knew was that there were hordes of steel (and other material, which I later learned was deldrin) bearings all over the bench; these were about 5-6mm in diameter.

I was now committed, so I cleaned up the various bits and pieces – there wasn't a trace of grease anywhere - using metal polish to clean the four metal cups on which the balls ran. The bottom cup, which I couldn't readily remove from its seating, looked a bit tired, so I turned to the Internet to locate a replacement. “Plastimo spares” led to “SeaTeach” and to a very knowledgeable guy named Jim. This is where the story becomes amusing, and is best explained by the discussion between us:

Me: “Can I get a replacement cup for the bottom race?”

Jim: “What colour is the gear?”

Me: “Grey”

Jim: “So it's a fairly modern kit – but it doesn't matter, you'll have to buy a new drum anyway”

Me: “Thanks, but forget it. By the way, do the steel balls go in one race and the Deldrin in the other?”

Jim: “Providing you haven't lost any, they go alternately in each race – they're about 20p each. And how are you going to stick them onto the cups when you re-assemble the gear?”

Me: (Thinking I've got 28 steel balls and 30 Deldrin, but I am absolutely sure I haven't lost any), “with grease.”

Jim: “You can't use grease. Use something like honey.

Me: “Pardon?”

Jim: “I said HONEY, because you can wash this out with hot water after re-assembly”.

And that's what I did. I made sure that the honey was cold, hence extra viscous. I made one mistake during re-assembly. I forgot to drop the four captive chain plate bolts into their holes *before* lowering the central core of the gear into place, so I had to start again.

So, if this season, you see a Leisure 23SL with a swarm of bees around its furling drum, you'll know it's Funadama.

Barri Hopkins