

Winter Clothing

So Winter is pretty much upon us and we will all be putting away our summer sailing kit, and for those of us brave enough we will all be looking forward to and talking about the autumn and winter race series that are on our door step!

The optimist sailor! (and smaller Topper sailors!)

If your child is looking to step in to their first winter of oppie sailing year, there are two main priorities for you to consider, warmth & comfort. There is a huge selection of available kit for these sailors on the market, and everyone has their own preference so below are the basics to ensure that your little one stays as warm and comfortable as possible on the water! I will start with the base layer from the bottom up!

The base layer

- Thermals - It is vital to get a good base layer and thermals are a must for the winter. Try to make sure they fit well, thermals do not work as well if they are loose fitting and baggy! You don't need to pay a lot of money for sailing thermals-many of the supermarkets do good value thermal tops and leggings.
- A Teddy Bear – This is an all in one fleece lined jumpsuit! Excellent at keeping your little ones warm. The size of this is not wholly important, the most important thing is that it is not too small for your sailor and there is room to move freely in it.
- Socks – Thermal socks or ski socks are ideal. Thin neoprene socks worn under the drysuit are also great for keeping feet warm.

The outer layer

- A Drysuit – I'm afraid a wetsuit just won't cut the cold waters for the winter. Does exactly what it says on the tin keeps your sailors bone dry! Important things to check are that the seals are comfortable and not too tight on the sailor, and front entry zips are easier to get in and out of (and to go to the loo!) than back entry drysuits!



- Footwear – Wet boots give yet more warmth to the extremities! Plus a firm footing when walking around the boat park. One thing to bear in mind is that you will probably need boots that are a size too big for your sailor to allow for the fact that your little one will be wearing ski socks increasing the size of their feet! Also a tip to help you get their boots on is to use ladies pop socks or plastic food bags!
- Gloves – again vitally important and this is an item where it does pay to spend that little bit extra. You need to kit them out with full neoprene gloves or better to try and keep those hands warm!



- Hats – Pretty simple one really anything warm will do, my only thoughts on them is that they should be fairly quick drying so should your little one take a dip the hat dries off pretty quick. Anything with microfleece lining is ideal, oh and they have to be colourful off course!
- Neck gaiters – Down to personal preference but these definitely help to keep you warm. Again any sort will do, and as with the hats microfleece lined makes the difference when wet!

That's pretty much it for your young sailors, the only thing left is the Hiking pants which strap over the drysuit. Due to the fact winter usually brings more wind, they will spend more time hiking out and the pants will help make this much more easy and comfortable and protect the valuable drysuit from abrasion on the deck. Just check that the hikers fit properly, the main thing to check is that the pads in the back of the pants still allow the sailor to bend their legs un-impeded.



The older junior & youth sailor

Once sailors have grown and matured enough many will choose to step up out of the dry suit, this usually coincides with sailors moving in to more physical dinghies such as the Topper or Laser.

So the base layer;

- Skin's or wetsuits are the main base. These are supplied by many of the manufacturer's in all sorts of manners. They basically do the same thing, rooster led the way but now all the manufacturers stock these. Most sailors choose a long john type wetsuit (with good core coverage) or a race skin.



- Below the wetsuit or skin most wear a rash vest or thicker thermal lined version of a rash vest (polypro tops, skin tops, thermalite)



- Socks – the boy's tend not to bother with socks, or may wear short wet socks, however the girls can always be seen on the water wearing long multicoloured thick socks! More of a fashion statement I should imagine but again I must!

Top Layer;

- Hikers – not to be confused with the junior hikers, these are generally made out of wetsuit material and have shoulder straps. Again add to warmth to the sailor and also comfort when hiking.



- Spray Jackets/Tops – Personal preference, but the majority will wear a ‘hot top’ or aqua fleece with some maybe opting for a drysuit top. Again there are a load on the market but word has it that the Zhik top is the warmest this winter!
- Footwear – wet boots are again the order, loads on offer and just like buying shoes the sailor just needs to make sure that they are comfortable to wear.
- Gloves – Most will wear full neoprene gloves to keep the cold out, but some do prefer gloves without the finger ends. Depends on how much they feel the cold. Again worth paying a bit extra!
- Hats – Exactly the same as the juniors, microfleece lined will ensure warmth and quick drying.
- Neck Gaiters – again the same as above. Some will want them some will not.

I hope that helps you to kit your young sailors out, the only item missing from the list is a buoyancy aid. Again there are a number on the market and it really is down to the sailors own choice, but the majority of sailors seem to prefer side zipped buoyancy aids leaving a large pocket on the front to stash sweets!

