



Proud to be... *the ONLY Optimist built in the USA!*

4737 Adams Road, Chattanooga TN 37343 (423) 875-0740 Fax (423) 875-0411

[optistuff.com](http://www.optistuff.com)

Preseason Boat Maintenance

How many times have you had a call from the yacht club or coach to discover Johnny's Optimist is broken because of something that you should have/ could have fixed easily before the season? Now, rather than enjoy a beautiful summer afternoon, you're at the club doing fiberglass work rain or shine!

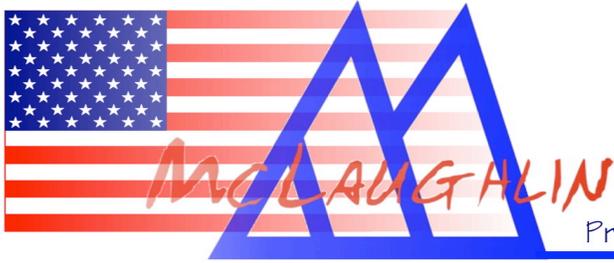
Below is our short list of critical areas you can inspect before the season starts. Granted, some of these repairs may or may not be something you want to tackle, but they are all critical and if inspected and dealt with before the season you are more likely to have breakdown free performance plus save time and money.

1. **The deck collar**-Did your sailor capsize and crack the deck collar last season? Can you see "spider" cracks in the gelcoat radiating out from under the collar? Can you move the collar with your hand or have reason to believe the deck might be damaged? If you answered yes to any of the above now is the time to take a closer look.



Deck collars are designed to fit snugly into a hole cut in the deck. They endure tremendous pressure. If the hole does not mate with the collar then the force will not be spread uniformly around the circle. The hole will continue to get bigger. The point pressure will continually crack the plastic collar and the screws will become loose and could damage their support surface. Worst case the crack opens into the fiberglass and the deck breaks up. McLaughlin's are engineered to greatly reduce all this but the hole and collar have got to be fixed. It is not hard to do and a photographic guide to all the repairs can be found at: <http://www.optistuff.com/info/faq/instructions/mastcollarandsteprepair.pdf>

2. **Blades**-The second most critical part of the boat is the tiller universal. The rubber thing that connects the tiller and tiller extension. Unless inspected it usually breaks while you are

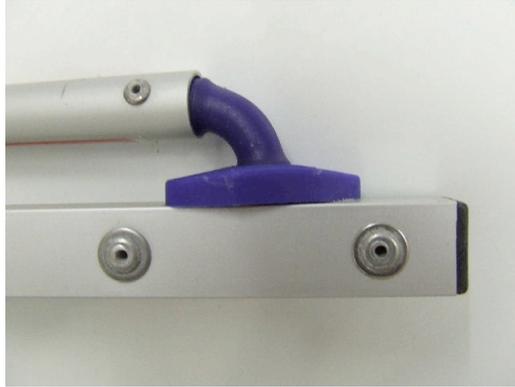


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fully hiked out in the middle of a race. They need to be inspected before every regatta. Bend it over in all directions. If you find a crack replace it. This is inexpensive and easy to do.



Another part that may need replacing is the bottom 3-hole rudder pintle. Check the corners up near the pin. Frequently the weld will break or the corner bend will tear. Evidence of this failure is visually evident long before the part gives way.

In 2004, the class converted to an epoxy blades made of clear epoxy and a foam core. The main purpose of this was to be able to inspect the entire laminate without any fancy equipment. You need to check the edges. If they are chipped or cracked water can get into the foam and a rough edge is not fast. If you look at your blades and see a dark brown spots on the edge, there's a chance that water might be entering the blade. It's not a big deal if dealt with. You just have to figure out how the water is getting to the core, let the blade dry out, and repair it. If you let it go it probably won't do a lot of damage since the foam is close celled.

3. **The nuts and bolts**-Granted, this might seem simple, but there are about 50 screws on an Optimist hull. Most of them are hidden when the boat is fully rigged, but they are all there for a reason. 8 screws in the base of a mast step means it needs 8 screws to stay put; not 4 and definitely not 2. To inspect the boat with a hand screw driver and back up wrench, start from the bow of the boat and work your way to the stern. Pay particular attention to the screws at the mast step. On a McLaughlin I doubt the mast step screws will move unless the boat was built in the 90's. Tighten those you can. If a screw is stripped out you can go to the next size up or slightly move the fitting and re seat. Don't forget the 4 screws holding the hiking straps. They are hidden and sometimes back out. Be sure to check the rudder and tiller. While you are at it check the welds on the bottom pintle. They have been known to fail.



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4. **Daggerboard Trunk-** When was the last time you took a good look at your dagger board trunk? Does the trailing edge of your dagger board look like a shark attacked it? Are there mysterious scratches that appear on the dagger board from time to time? If any of this rings a bell, now's the time to check out your trunk. Inside the Optimist trunk there should be 4 "inserts" or rubber bummers that keep the edges of the board from cutting into the fiberglass. 2 at the top and 2 at the bottom on opposing ends. If they are not there, now's a great time to replace them. If the board has "cut" into the trunk, (usually on the bottom rear) now is when you should fix it. The sides of the truck also may have Teflon wear strips. Do look closely since they can be clear. If you do not have liner strips on the sides of the trunk, now would be a great time to install them.

5. **Spars and Lines-** Although Optimist spars are designed to last as long, as or longer than the boat itself, they still need a little attention from time to time. In the off season, a quick coat of McLube will go along way from keeping the saltwater from eroding the metal. It also helps sail ties slide! Take a close look at the end fittings of each spar. Can you turn or pull out any of them with your hand? Is a fitting missing? When you rotate the spar can you hear water in the spar? If so, now is a great time to replace, reseal and or glue that particular fitting. How about the running rigging (lines)? If you see any wear on the running rigging, now is a great time to fix the problem. Again look at the hiking strap line hidden under the air bag.

There are instructions on many of these repairs in our FAQ section of our website. If you have any questions or concerns about a repair, please do not hesitate to contact us. We can talk you through just about anything and would be very happy to help assist you.