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SMALL ERROR COULD MISLEAD THE READERSHIP

The enclosed photo poster [of Saraband racing out beneath the Golden Gate] shows a Westsail doing 6.5 knots to weather. A few days after the photo was taken, the wind came from far enough aft to bump the speed to 12 knots. This, admittedly, is not a speed normally attained by such a boat, but nonetheless a speed witnessed at least nine times on this boat.

I've hit 11 knots on Westsails at least 100 times with no less than 10 different crewmembers. The best 24-hour run I've had has been 187 miles, a 7.79 average. The second best was 185 miles, recorded in 1985 by a stock as stone Westsail 32 with blisters and a maximum headsail of 135%. It was also sitting a bit low in the water because she was in full cruising mode. I only mention these things for one reason. I honestly feel that the October issue of Latitude contained a small error that could mislead the readership as to the true sailing ability of the Westsail 32. I am aware of what most people think of the boat's performance and I believe I know why. However, after sailing five different Westsail 32s, my experience contradicts that of its image.

If a Westsail 32 encounters a typical 32-foot racer/cruiser that is unladen, she stands a good chance of losing a race. If the racer/cruiser is loaded for long distance cruising, the Westsail will most likely beat her. If the Westsail is prepared for racing — a very rare occurrence — and encounters, any 32-foot racer/cruiser, she stands an equal chance of winning a race. Period. Want to twist the knife? Under most conditions encountered on a long distance journey, the equally prepared and sailed 32s would find the Westsail beating the racer/cruiser 32.

What is usually observed, however, is the Apple/Orange problem. A Westsail 32 is a full cruising boat. Its performance should not be compared to a racer/cruiser that is not playing the same game. My observation is that the racer/cruiser, when loaded for cruising and in the ocean, makes a very poor showing for herself compared to a racing sistership.

There is an understandable, though lengthy, explanation as to how a boat like a Westsail 32 can realize so much of her potential. Perhaps Max Ebb and Lee Helm could help the readership out sometime soon as I'm fairly certain that most people have heard enough from me. As regards to the rest of the article, I felt it was accurate, beneficial and timely. Thanks for printing it.

David King

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Westsail Owners — If you want a copy of the poster David mentioned at the beginning of his letter, 800 more are left at \$9 each (or as low as \$5 in quantity) from Box 17644, Portland 97217. It's a genuinely terrific aerial photograph of Saraband taken by Helen Helsley that every Westsail 32 owner will want, if only for the title: Saraband, Westsail 32, 1988 Pacific Cup Winner.