

Halyard Windlass Installation for Blue Goose, 28 ft Catboat

There have been questions raised in the past concerning the possibility, and advisability, of the installation of a powered winch or windlass for raising the halyards, particularly on the larger Catboats. *Blue Goose* is 28 ft at the waterline, and hoists over 400 sq. ft. of sail. Capt. Harper, the previous owner, usually sailed with several friends aboard, and he used 2 helpers to raise the sail. One person kept the boat headed into the wind, one stood up at the mast hauling, then sweating, the halyards, and another aft, in the cockpit to tail out and cleat them off. My wife, Pat, and I always sail together, but only occasionally with guests. Our first concern, before buying the boat was “How are we going to raise the sail? We must have a powered windlass.”



Broad Reach

I searched the archives and found that the main concern was that the power available could overstress the halyards or any part if things didn't run smoothly. First, the mast hoops might get stuck going up the mast, and get broken. *Blue Goose* has a wooden sail track and bronze slides, not hoops, so that's no concern for us. Second, care must be used when reaching the “full raised” position. Yes, care must be taken. Third, “It's not traditional.” Yup, right. *Blue Goose* was built in 1928, we don't know if she had hoops or sail track when new, but do know she's had the track since at least the mid-1950s. But power wouldn't be traditional, either way. Pat and I are only about 15 yrs younger than *Blue Goose*, we'd “retired” from sailing about 6 yrs ago, but we missed it and wanted to sail some more. We needed power assistance. Capt. Harper said, “Well, OK, if the next owner wants to, it's easily reversible.” Four months later, when he sailed with us he said, “That's really neat.”

It is a relatively easy job to install a powered windlass on the coach roof, back at the cockpit, where the halyards were already led. Powered winches, used for sheets or halyards, are more complicated and more powerful than actually needed, and are quite expensive. One advantage they have is that they are “one way” ratcheting, so the line will not be pulled back when you release your pull. I didn't find a windlass that did that, but leading the halyards thru cam cleats is a good solution.



Fair Leads and Cam Cleats



Windlass and Halyards Location

Vetus-Maxwell's "Anchormax Vertical Capstan" has been the solution for us. It has a maximum pull of over 800 lb, much more than needed, will draw 500 watts at full load (~40 amps at 12 volts), and extends less than 6 inches below deck. It's only single speed, not a problem. And it's reasonably priced. With a foot switch and circuit breaker it's safe and easy to use. I was able to keep the wiring run to a minimum, and used #6 cable. The Anchormax manual is very instructive, mounting templates and wiring instructions are good, details need not be given here.

For physical installation, making the 4 inch hole thru the coach roof is the biggest job. Be sure you have sufficient clearance under the coach roof to allow a little wiggle room for wrenches and the cable connections. I mounted the windlass on a mahogany base to raise it a bit from the deck, and allow the halyards to ride up in the fairleads over the cam cleats while hauling. When pausing, I just hold the line down with my hand to draw it into the cleat. Our throat halyard has a 3 to 1 advantage, the peak halyard a 5 to 1, so they must normally be hauled one at a time, switching back and forth. There is just enough room on the drum to haul both, with two wraps each, for a start, if desired.

Just for some additional help I have installed a small Lewmar sheet winch for the topping lift, mounted similarly on the port side of the coach roof. The line was already led to that point, but it required 2 strong men to operate it. This also is easily reversible if desired.



Windlass and Halyards

-- more available pix, use as desired

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