

START OF SEASON

BLOCKS, SHEAVES, MAINSHEET TRAVELER & GENOA CAR CHECKS

With spring just around the corner, it's time to check your deck hardware for signs of wear and tear, especially mast sheaves and blocks before you re-step. A little time spent now can save a lot of grief and aggravation in the sailing season and save you money in the long run.

For blocks and mast sheaves

Flush through with fresh water if you have left them exposed to the elements over the winter, you can use a mild detergent to remove mould and mildew, make sure it is ecologically friendly though. Do not oil or grease, this attracts dirt and salt which is abrasive.

Check for excessive movement on the bearings of both blocks and sheaves, especially at the mast head. A broken mast sheave invites the halyard to jam itself at the worst possible moment with a trip aloft the only alternative to remove a sail. Barton carries a range of sheave sizes from 30mm up to 70mm diameter or you can contact your mast manufacturer for replacements. If you cannot get the exact same diameter, that's ok, as long as you make sure your replacement sheave is a tight fit width ways in the mast casing to prevent your mouseline jumping off the sheave and jamming.

This masthead definitely needs some attention



Remove and inspect sheave

Replace this block

Check for signs of elongation around the fixing holes and shackles at the head of your blocks, this would suggest overloading, if in any doubt replace it with a higher load block; this especially applies to mast head blocks which are not so easy to inspect, threaded and drilled shackle pins are a must aloft should be wire seized and taped, or even cable tied to prevent unlocking. On the rest of your yacht, look at the condition of your split rings, if they are not tightly coiled then replace with new ones, I always keep a packet handy. Handy tip is to cover both sides of the split ring with a single piece of electrical or spreader tape and stick it onto itself, this helps prevent snagging in ropes and halyards.

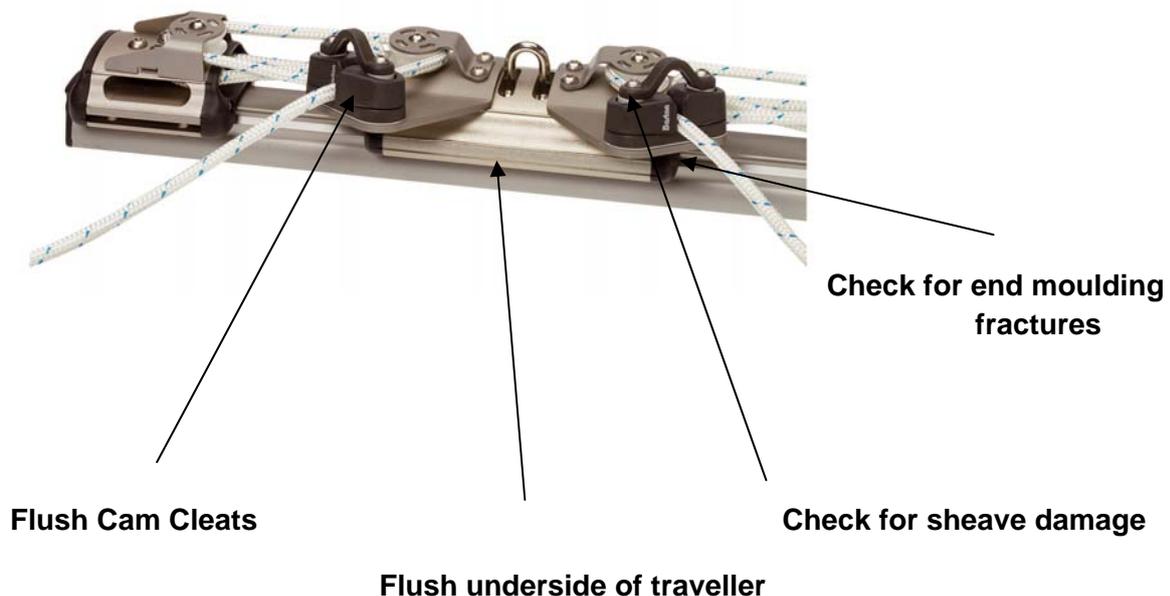
For ball bearing blocks, the sheaves should spin freely, again flush through with fresh water. Any grinding or uneven spin after flushing would suggest the block has been overloaded. Ball bearing blocks are not suitable for high static loads, such as round the mast base, replace with a plain bearing block or one with a higher rolling load rating



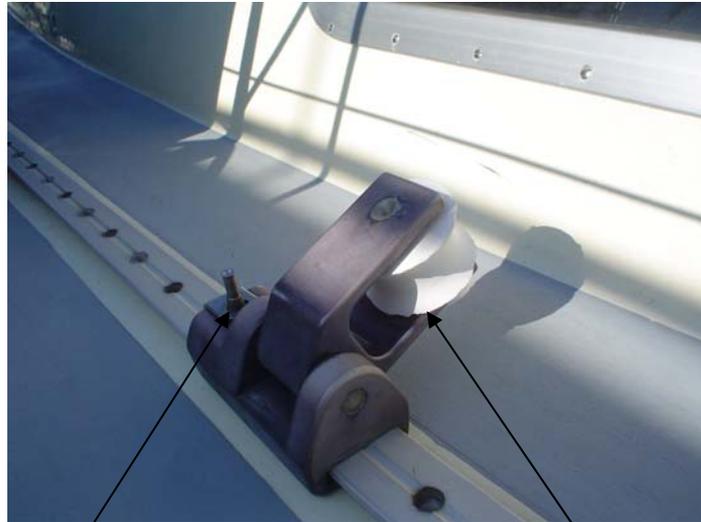
Plain bearing blocks fitted at the mast base

For Mainsheet Traveller and Genoa cars

Mainsheet traveller - Rinse thoroughly with a hose pipe and fresh water, especially the underbody where the ball bearings run in the car and along the track, again you can use a mild detergent solution for stubborn salt deposits, it will not harm the anodising. Take time to look at the end mouldings on the traveller car. Crash gybes are usually the cause of fractures, add spare end mouldings to your 'to do' list, you will need to remove the traveller car to do this so be sure to seek out or source a short length of track to transfer the traveller car onto for repair. Flush through your control line cam cleats with water under pressure, the cams should open and return freely, if not unscrew them and disassemble to check for broken return springs. Worn cam jaws reduce the efficiency of the cleat and will require a new replacement, go for the highest specification cleat you can afford for a longer life, we can recommend our K Cam series made from Kevlar and Zytel. Check also the condition of the control line sheaves, they are easy to remove and inspect, replacements may be required



Genoa Cars – Check for signs of excessive movement about the sheave bearing, a small amount of play is acceptable any more than this may cause the sheave to lock up under load, warning signs are excessive wear to one side of the sheave where it is not rotating. Sheaves can be replaced so long as the car has been regularly flushed through and looked after, heavy corrosion of the aluminium around the spindle makes it impossible to repair.



Broken pin needs replacing

Sheave damage will chafe sheets

The list of jobs to do may seem endless, but get the important ones over with now, the remainder can be saved for a sunny day in dock or at anchor.