



Oakcliff Helix: Building the DNA of Champions

Sailing success is never a straight line.

Facts:

- A lack of high-profile American success at the Olympics has resulted in the dissolution of obvious paths from interest to success.
- Introduction of new classes have resulted in growing pains including costly class changes and a race to find robust training platforms.
- The Olympics are expensive, but as in every great endeavor, no amount of money makes up for wasted time. Time is ultimately the most valuable resource.
- The US tax code and institutional funding is different and may be more complicated than other countries but can be used effectively.

This paper is designed to outline the stages of an athlete's journey from just beginning to explore the Olympic classes to actually arriving at the Olympic Games. Most importantly, the costs and timing of each stage are included to help athletes and their support networks spend their time and money most efficiently. This will inform decisions about when to move from one stage to the next. If they are ready, they move to the next rung; if they are not, then they repeat the stage for another training block. These cyclical training patterns repeat like a helix so the athletes are always getting the most benefit out of their training.

This document focuses on the High Performance Classes of 49er, 49erFX, Nacra 17s and 470s. It is envisioned that this Helix can be adapted to other classes. Another Helix will be released specifically for the Short Handed Mixed Offshore Keelboat. The Formula Kite and Windsurfer iFoil classes are not contemplated at this point only because Oakcliff does not have enough experience to create one. They may be added in the future.



Oakcliff's Promise to Olympic Hopefuls

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Olympic Dinghy Helix

Rung 1: Summer Academy

Sailors with some dinghy experience begin with exploration of Olympic type sailing at the 12 day Oakcliff High Performance Academy. Experience can be in smaller skiffs or cats but this is less important than a fearless curiosity to learn new skills and a vision for their future. Sailors experience Olympic Class boats and gain technical skills to maintain their equipment and some tools to manage a campaign.

Goal: Decide if sailing is the athlete's primary sport, and if an Olympic campaign may be a goal in the future.

Costs:

- Oakcliff's High Performance summer Academy: \$1,225 plus travel (includes boat usage, room and board, coaching, gym, etc.)



Factors to consider before moving to this level include:

- The athlete is older than 15 years old
- Can be away from home for at least a week
- Is willing to learn to cook and clean and do their own laundry
- Is passionate about learning

Rung 2: Interest and Exploration

Athletes who have chosen sailing as their primary sport and attend high school and train in residence at Oakcliff with the USPA Student Sapling Program. College age athletes either take a gap year or attend college remotely at Oakcliff and train. Athletes sail High Performance Olympic boats, including 49ers, FX, and Nacra 17s but also cross train in match racing and keel boats to gain holistic skills. As part of this program, athletes compete in the Triple Crown, with an emphasis on learning and setting a baseline race standard. No expectations on results. Any podium finishes are simply a bonus – prize grants can be used towards tuition. Athletes study year round at Oakcliff, with intense training in the early Fall and a ‘spring training’ session at a warm base. This is designed for younger athletes who benefit from the in-person learning coach, structure, and adult supervision provided in the safe environment at Oakcliff.

Goal: Discover if the Olympic classes are what the athlete is interested in / would think about committing to in the future. Gain a strong foundation in all things leading to successful future campaigns, including fitness, fiscal and personal responsibility (cleaning, time management, cooking etc.). Begin to become independent.

Costs:

- Oakcliff’s student sapling program: \$20,346 per semester (including housing, coaching, USPA classes and learning coaches, food, etc.)

Factors to consider before moving to this level include:



- Can live at an 'away camp.' Can deal with being away from home for an extended period.
- Can commit to the full session
- May not know what they want to do but know they are destined for something great.

Rung 3: Southern Test Rung

Once the athlete has committed to the interest and exploration rung or is at a similar level, an assessment is made if a pre-holiday trip to Florida is worth the expenses and the time vs. the value to be gained. The cost per team is approximately: \$7,550. Athletes compete in the Florida November [Olympic Development Program](#) Camp, Youth Classes Training run by Leandro Spina and other similar events.

Goal: Determine if the athlete is right for the boat, seriously test crew/skipper combinations, determine if the Olympic goal and all that comes with it is worth personal and financial investment. See if the athlete is ready for open competition. Gain personal planning and organization skills. Learn independence, especially from adults / chaperone.

Costs Estimated:

- Travel: \$350 roundtrip per person
- Transfers: \$100-500 (depending on rental car or Uber)
- Hotel: \$1500 (housing in Miami is usually \$80/night per person if you can share, and \$120 if not)
- Coach or chaperone if needed: \$300-600 per day
- Boat Charter: \$2000 (plus anywhere from \$200-500 for boat updates, depending on charter).
- Storage at USSC Miami: \$130 per month
- Other costs: \$1,000-2,000 (food, entry fee depending on events)
- *TOTAL ESTIMATE: \$7,000-\$8,000*



Factors to consider before moving to this level include:

- Student Sapling Program allows for this in its scheduling
- The sailor is not behind in their high school or college education.
- A top-half finish in the Triple Crown
- Advanced planning and a concerted effort to raise funds for this at least 6 months in advance. This should not be a last minute – *gee that would be fun trip* – that is a vacation not a training plan.
- Approximately 80% of the ideal height and weight for skipper and crew
- There is \$7,500 in their bank account

Rung 4: Full Southern Winter Rung

Begins with the Triple Crown and USPA High School (or remote college). Athlete transitions to Florida for November ODP Training session and stays through the [OCR Regattas](#) 1-3. They continue training at their southern base as a 'pod' until the late spring, when they return to Oakcliff or their home waters. Can resume training at Oakcliff for the summer if applicable. The most important part of this rung is that a 'pod' should have been formed and all sailors shall train as a team, focusing on utilizing shared resources such as coaching, housing, support personnel.

Goal: Build high-level racing and boat handling skills for international competition. Finalize partnership with crew/skipper through a signed Memorandum of Understanding. Gain skills in budgeting, travel planning, personal/time management, smart and strategic decision making. Should be prepared to live independently of an adult/ chaperone.

Costs Estimated:

- Travel: \$700 roundtrip (for 2 air tickets)
- Transfers: \$500 (Uber)
- Hotel or Air BNB 4 months: \$1,500 per - \$6,000
 - Alternate housing considerations – RV/ Toy hauler
- Coaching in between events: \$5,000



- Boat charter: 4 months at \$3,000
- Storage at USSC Miami: \$130 per month
- Sail and boat repair: \$2,000
- Food: \$25/day
- Other costs: \$1,000 (Entry fees, camp fees)
- *TOTAL ESTIMATE: \$17,000-\$20,000*

Factors to consider before moving to this level include:

- The athlete is mature enough to spend the winter in Florida with all of the temptations of living on their own
- The athlete is responsible and organized enough to supervise their own schooling with a remote learning coach
- The athlete is 90% of the height and weight for the class and has committed to a regular fitness and nutrition program
- At least one athlete on the team is a safe and licensed driver
- Knows the basics of fundraising, public relations, and personal brand marketing.
- Personal responsibility – be able to pay bills, take care of food, housing, travel etc. with minimal help.

Investment:

Estimate Boat can be amortized over 3 years, sails over 1 year

- Boat: New \$25,000, Used \$8,000-11,000
- Sails: New \$3,500, Used – Main \$500, Jib \$200, Kite \$500 (depending on condition)
- Truck: \$16,000

Rung 5: North American Rung

Students study online, or more likely, education is not relevant at this point in their lives. The athlete trains with their fleet in Oyster Bay in early Fall, including competing in the Triple Crown, and transitions to Florida for the Thanksgiving Training session. Stays through the [OCR Regattas](#) 1-3 and in March chooses to



continue training with the 'pod' in Florida before heading to California for their OCR Events in June and July. Return to Oyster Bay for the Triple Crown Series in the Fall.

Goal: Focus on “final touches” of boat handling and tactics, ready to produce Top 20 results in international competition. Committed to the Olympic goal wholeheartedly. Fully prepared to run a campaign – has established PR channels, a full budget and schedule, coaching plan, etc. Is fundamentally independent, and can handle personal responsibility like bills, health and fitness, etc.

Factors to consider before moving to this level include:

- The athlete is of the height and weight for the class and has committed to a serious fitness program
- Athlete has committed to the Olympic dream - becoming an Olympian is the athlete's main goal
- Both athletes on the team are safe and licensed drivers
- Ideally one athlete has a family home (free housing) in Florida (if so then trains there from November through May), California (if so trains there April through September) or North East (if so trains there from April through July) – Or the athletes have secured long term housing in these locations.
- Athlete or family has at least \$8,000 emergency funds in their bank account

Costs Estimated:

- Travel: \$700 RT (for 2 air tickets)
- Transfers: \$500 (Uber)
- Hotel or Air BNB 4 months: \$1500 per - \$6000
- Coaching in between events: \$5000
- Boat Purchase: New - \$25,000, Used - \$11,000
 - Plus, depending on charter, shipping the boat to CA – \$750-1,500
- Sail and boat repair: \$2000
- Food: \$30/day



- Other costs: \$1,000-3,000
 - Entry fees, camp fees, boat storage in CA (USSC Long Beach)
- *TOTAL ESTIMATE: \$60,000-78,000 WITH BOAT PURCHASE*

Rung 6: International Rung

The final step for those headed to the Olympics. The athlete has either finished their education or is committed to self-moderated online education. The athlete trains in Florida and stays through the OCR Regattas 1-3. Athletes spend the spring competing in Europe. In late summer, they return to California for the two OCR events in July and August. Athletes may come to Oyster Bay in late September for the Triple Crown as a way to check in with domestic fleets and inspire the next generation, and back to Florida for the winter once that is completed. Athletes at this level will look to compete in events such as:

- Pan Am Games
- Class World Championships
- Kiel Week
- European Championships
- Trofeo S.A.R Princesa Sofia

Goal: Prepare for Olympic Qualification and win Olympic medals.

Factors to consider before moving to this level include:

- Must be able to train in all conditions - they thrive on being wet and uncomfortable
- Important to be fit and most importantly mentally and physically active - Athlete has committed to a complete and well-rounded fitness and training program.
- Athletes must be able to run, finance and manage their campaigns
- Athlete or family has at least \$10,000 emergency funds
- Athletes must be completely dedicated to the Olympic ideal – they're out to win a medal, not goof around.
- One team member has an international drivers license



Costs Estimated per Trip:

- Travel: \$1250 per round trip ticket per person
- Transfers: \$70 per person
- Hotel or Air BNB 4 months: Palma & Hydras - \$50 per night/person; northern Europe - \$70 per night/person
- Coaching in between events: 300-600 Euro per day
- Boat shipping: \$2,000
- Sail and boat repair: \$2000
- Food - \$30/day per person
- Documents/life stuff: passport update (if rushed can cost up to \$450, make sure to have that figured out months in advance), international driver's license (\$25), international medical coverage (Consider GEO Blue plans),
- Contingency: (*from Roble/Shea Sailing*) our hospital trips, extended trips, car breakdowns, robberies (3 major) have cost anywhere from \$450 (X-ray) to \$10,000 (medical bills after bad boat hoisting accident). Insurance doesn't always cover everything...having access to \$5,000 for emergency is important. Oakcliff will offer emergency funds for Olympians who have worked with our program.
- Other costs:
 - Extra gear - freezing in Palma, need to travel to Europe with a Super-warm, thick booties and other cold weather gear (up to \$1,000)
 - Rental car or car lease: \$30/day
 - international cell coverage (\$30-80/month)
- **TOTAL ESTIMATE: \$30,000-\$40,000 PER TRIP**

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As you progress up the helix, our emergency team is available to qualified athletes 24/7 with emergency assistance from public relations to logistics, from legal to financial. An athlete may request that up to \$5000 of their triple crown prize grants be held in liquid assets to be deployed within 24 hours to anywhere in the world.

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