The Winning Crew - Getting a great start

Being the skipper requires huge amounts of multitasking:

- Race managment
- Crew management
- Boat management
- Sail trim
- Tactics
- Safety
- Oh, and steering the boat!

Planning and preparation (and luck) make for a good start.

What are the elements that make a good start?

Preparation:

Before leaving home:

Check forecast – how strong and predicted shifts - this will guide you in sail choice and tactics.
Leave home in good time! Don't be late!!!

At the boat:

Learn how to rig -
tie a bowline
where the sheets go etc
knots in kite sheets or not
block positions for each headsail

Take the load off the skipper

A great start means:

Hitting the line where you want to be, going the way you want to be going
At full speed
Right on the gun
In clear air
With freedom to tack
Knowing what the course is!!

So – on a typical Saturday afternoon:

1. Get out early and get timing sequence ASAP from other starts – usually at least 5 starts before we go. Stay close to start boat to do this. Use the Red Book to get fleet start order.

   Crew can:
   do the timing
   keeping watch for other boats
   knowing race fleet order from the Red Book

2. Check boat tuning for windward beat – block positions, main outhaul, backstay, halyard tensions etc. Sort out any bugs. Where is the best wind?

   Crew can:
   Check and suggest adjustments to halyard tension
   Check forestay sag
   Work out how to handle tacks etc.
   Establish where the headsail should be sheeted to when on the wind.
   Look to see where the best wind is using wind on water and other boat that have already started.
   Observe wind shifts

3. Check the line for length and bias

   Crew can:
   look at the way the start boat is lying – it might provide a guide to bias

4. Get a shore/start line transit

5. During the last 5 mins before the start the crew can:

   Watch out for other boats especially those just below who may force your boat up or even across the line
   Stand on bow judging distance/time to the line using shore transit.
   Check the course flag!

   After crossing the line crew can:

   Use their weight to balance the boat
   Advise the skipper of other boats which may present a problem.
   Be prepared for the first tack

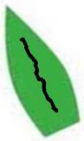
Which end of the line?

Sail along lining the buoy up with the flag mast on the start boat

Take Compass Reading e.g. 340deg

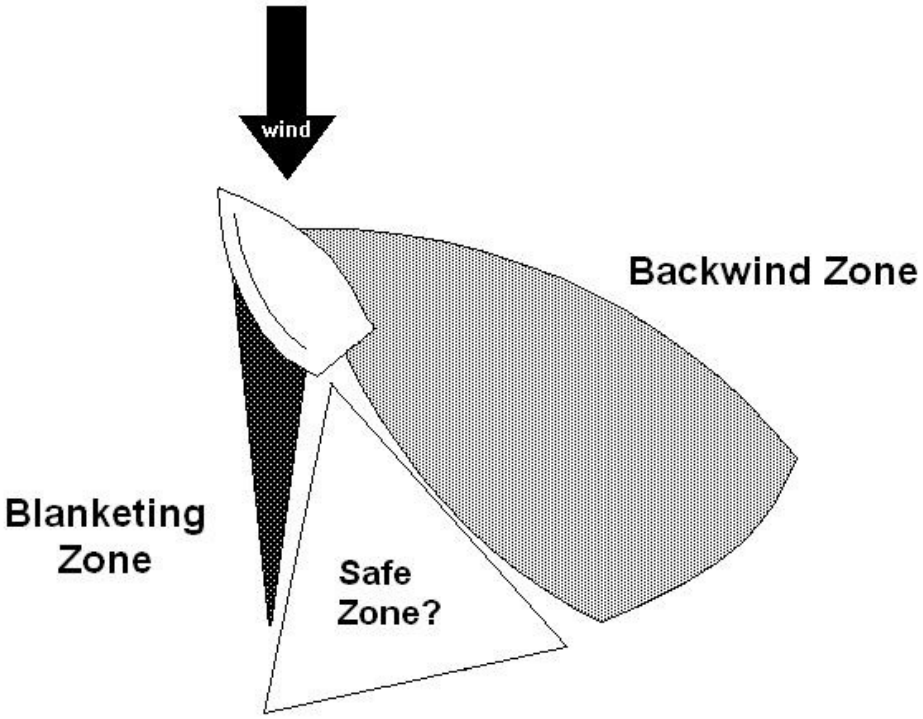
Subtract 90 from line compass reading e.g. 340 - 90 = 250deg

Now go Head To Wind - Take a Compass Reading e.g. 225deg



If Head To Wind is bigger, then the boat end is favoured. In this case it isn't so the buoy end is better.

In this case, if the line was 100m long then the buoy end would give a lead of 40m !!



These are the generally accepted area of backwind and blanketing.

Note the "safe" area on the leeward quarter.