

99 Reasons

by **John Barbano**

Photographs courtesy of 2017 IODA North American parents

You know you are an avid (crazy?) Opti parent when:

1. You own a large SUV, and another vehicle with a hitch and roof racks;
2. Your two-year old SUV has 182,000 original miles, smells nasty, and has assorted of straps, hitches and bungies.
3. The trunk of all your vehicles has towels, Febreeze, a case of water and Gatorades all the time.
4. Your SUV's rear floor is filled with sand, eel grass and water. despite strict rules on hosing off and keeping sailing clothes in a plastic bag.
5. You have a roll of 100 big plastic bags in your car at all times (see above).
6. You sell your car, and the Opti magnet peels off the paint.
7. The trade in value for your SUV is worthless because of foul odors, so you have to sell it to an Opti parent.
8. Your friend almost passes out from the smell of rotted sailing boots and you didn't even notice it.
9. Your laundry room smells, and you don't notice or care. Your dog won't enter the room, it stinks too much.
10. You have clothes lines in your garage, your den, your basement, your car, and outside your house.
11. You have figured out how to wash and dry gloves, boots and all types of sailing clothes in your hotel room.
12. You collect quarters like you did when you were just out of college for hotel washers and dryers when you are on the road and get up at 4 am to beat the other parents to the laundry.
13. You had a nice 23-foot party boat, which you replaced with an 18-foot foot RIB, that cost twice as much, that you need for your coach.
14. Your first passport stamp was when your sailor made the Holland team.
15. You own more Opti's than your family has sailors, by a factor of two.
16. You time trips ashore for bathroom breaks as your sailor finishes a race, motoring faster than safe speed so you can don't miss her next start.
17. Your sailor tells you he knows he needs to be on the line, needs to find a big hole, knows there is a giant sag in the middle, knows he needs a good start, and he is trying, but it is hard.
18. You and your spouse spend the week-end driving to regattas, in different cars and counties, with different kids.
19. Your communication with your spouse on the weekend is via cell phone/text comparing race by race results, and you don't see each other until Sunday nights, maybe.
20. Your coach speaks at three languages.
21. You complain bitterly about the condition of the host club and the racing conditions, and then remember you haven't mowed your grass in weeks.
22. You look forward to Monday so that you can go back to work, and relax.
23. You travel the world, but have never seen the tourist attractions, only the yacht club, hotels, rental car counters, airports and grocery stores, and, if you are lucky, a restaurant or two.
24. You have not celebrated your anniversary for three years because it always falls on a practice or regatta day.
25. You spend your 25th wedding anniversary at an USNT practice, run into close sailing friends (from out of town) and dine with them. They pick up dinner. This is from experience!
26. You get good at yelling "**do you need snacks or drinks?**", very quickly.
27. You give directions to non sailors, you use yacht clubs as landmarks.
28. You drive a long way to a team practice to get your sailor on this team.
29. Your house is like a boarding house.
30. You have silly blow up beds that your kids love but you refuse to sleep on.
31. Your sailor's teachers give homework assignments on practice days. **What were they thinking?**
32. You **finally** understand every flag the Race Committee uses.
33. You have a protest flag in your kitchen that your sailor knows to mean that they must do a two-turns penalty while promptly cleaning up their mess or risk being grounded for a DSQ.
34. You reference your children's ages as White, Blue and Red Fleet ages.
35. You spend \$1,200 to travel to the Jersey Shore and never see the ocean.
36. Your casual shirts are regatta T-shirts.
37. Your child's most expensive clothes are their sailing clothes,
38. You know what makes US Coast Guard approved life jackets different.
39. Regatta venues are you favorite places.
40. You can sleep in a hotel room with 12 teenagers while they play video games,
41. You think board shorts are better looking than regular shorts.
42. Hotels are your summer home.
43. Newbie parents ask you rules related questions on the water.
44. You buy a newspaper to dry your sailor's boots rather than reading it.
45. You willingly buy a \$600 dry suit, but freak when your sailor wants a cool pair of \$89 sneakers.
46. You are happy to spend \$500 on a new sail, but you go crazy when the materials for your child's science fair project cost \$45.
47. Your sail shop has your credit card number on file, and knows who will accept packages when you are away.
48. The new normal is for you to drive to a regatta on a Saturday morning, in the rain, and Starbucks isn't open yet.
49. You haven't made non-sailing vacation or weekend plans for years.
50. You eat Christmas dinner in Coconut Grove for five to 10 years.

John Barbano is a member of Brant Beach Yacht Club and past Secretary of USODA. His two sons sailed Optis from 1996-2008. He has enjoyed his service to junior sailing and cherishes the special memories.

Fun Sailing

99 Reasons continued

51. All your vacation time is at regattas.
52. You begin to use words like barging, OCS, lift, knock, clean start, jibe, in normal conversations. Your use of block and tackle befuddles your football friends.
53. You can assemble an Opti dolly in six seconds; down from 12 minutes.
54. You and your spouse agree pregnancies cannot conflict with Team Trials.
55. You schedule family weddings between Nationals and New Englands.
56. You have a wide variety of coolers in your basement, labeled "one-day regatta, two-day regatta, etc".
57. You know the stores near your sailors' practice because that is where you do 90% your shopping. Don't forget to bring one of your coolers for the groceries.
58. Your child gets hurt and you wonder whether he will miss the next regatta.
59. You have not met a PRO who can set a square line when your sailor is OCS.
60. You celebrate a judge when he penalizes another sailor, but call him clueless when he cites your sailor.
61. Your daughter and her teammates get stuck in the hotel elevator and you wonder if they can file for redress if they miss the first race.
62. You think your kid is aggressive on the line, while other sailors sail **dirty**.
63. Your sailor is whacked by the boom and you want to tell him to stop crying or he will miss the next start.
64. Despite having become a master negotiator with airline counter agents, you visit the airport manager's office for losing your temper over not bringing a blade bag on the plane.
65. You are okay with mandatory parent meetings being held at the hotel pool lasting until 2 am.
66. You know the locations of Subway and pizza places at every yacht club.
67. You look forward to a day off to golf/see friends, only to learn practice has been changed.
68. You're the only person at work who knows about sailing and nobody cares.



69. You have an excuse not to garden or clean house, and you don't care because you are away.
70. You don't have to entertain in your home because you are never there.
71. You have perfected the perfect PBj.
72. Your close friends are now your sailing friends, a plane ride away.
73. You prefer to hang out with sailing team parents and plan the next trip.
74. You and your wife's muscles are buffed from lifting Optis over your head and on to the roof.
75. You are ready for every breakdown with spares in your car and garage.
76. Old sails become decoration.
77. Being scolded by a teenage yacht club coach for spectating too close to the course is great preparation for being the parent of a teenager.
78. You've forgotten where you go to church.
79. You have Genoa's cell phone number, her home phone and the USODA office on speed dial, along with your coaches and fellow team parents.
80. It seems unfair for you to wear dilapidated DSW loafers while your sailor has \$80 docksiders and \$120 sailing boots, but **they** have to look good.
81. It is unfair that you have a pair of truck stop polarized sun glasses and your sailor has \$200 Oakleys.
82. You have the lyrics of every child's star album memorized.
83. You know the top sailors' sail numbers, their profiles and preferred sailing clothes looking through binoculars half a mile away (and know your child a mile away).
84. You spend \$500 on binoculars, \$250 on a VHF radio, but won't spend a nickel to replace a can opener in your house, and your spouse agrees!
85. Your golf handicap goes to a 22 and



- no one wants you on their scramble because they know you lack a game.
86. You have a comprehensive tool kit with gadgets, lines, blocks, wires, tape/screw/nut/glue with the Opti, but never at home.
87. You finally put together a second set of tools for home, or three if you have other sailors.
88. You purchased 15 measuring tapes.
89. Your sailor's boat is better cared for than your car.
90. You field-test winter clothing by standing in sideways driven rain watching a regatta from the end of the dock.
91. You should be at work at 9 am but you are at home doing regatta logistics planning.
92. You are promoted to Supply Chain Logistics Director at work because of the Opti logistic skills you acquired.
93. The US Military needs you for moving troops around more effectively.
94. You have a killer checklist for packing for regattas.
95. Your kids now have two succinct set of friends, school and sailing. The latter will endure forever.
96. You are an expert at tying Optis and dollies to trailers.
97. You are warmly greeted at your sailing parts store. **Cha ching \$\$\$.**
98. You mourn your child's last year in Opti's because it will all be over and you **know** it was the best thing to happen to you and your sailor.
99. you realize that the regatta trophies/ribbons will be left in the attic forever. **You will realize life in Optis is about the precious, quality times you shared together, the friends you now have forever, and the places you have seen. Cherish this.** ☺