Wood Whisker Pole Launcher for your Woodie
By Darrell Sorensen

About a year and half ago I was looking into getting a whisker pole launcher for my wood Windmill. I found out the parts are available from APS (*Annapolis Performance Sailing*) I found it under Snipe parts, $412 for it complete or $168 for just the fittings. That's a lot of money, so I thought – why don't I just make one out of wood since the spars on my boat are wood. I made the pole out of Sitka Spruce in two halves, with about a ¼' to 3/8" hole in the center for the line. I had a through deck block to use on the rear of the pole. Also there I made a cap with slot & space to hold the end of the shock cord. Since I don't own a lathe I cut out sections of plywood with hole saws to stack up for the sliding collar. Then bored it out with a smaller hole saw. A little sanding with a belt sander and it was done. The trumpet end is also made that way with a 1 5/8" hole saw. The other parts needed was 25 feet of 1/4" shock line, 30 feet of light line a couple of plastic strap fairleads, a 1 3/4" sheave where the shock cord passed through the rear of the boom and the most expensive thing was the small swivel cleat & block that goes on the mast, about $60.
The wood pole launcher worked flawlessly last sailing season that included over 20 days of sailing. One time we forgot to retract the pole before jibing, it had a good bend in it, but didn't break!
I am now making three more for this sailing season.
Parts list:
2 – Stika Spruce 3/4" x 1 1/2" x 103"
1 – Through deck block. Harken 088 or equivalent
25' – 1/4" shock cord
30' – 3mm line
1 - 1 3/4" Sheave
1 – 1/4" SS bolt (cut off head & saw a screw driver slot to hold sheave in place)
1 – Small single block
2 – 1/2" line fairleads Holt HA382/2 or equivalent
2 – Small eye straps
1 – Ronstan RF5 swivel-ling cleat platform or equivalent
1 – Line stopper ball
Scraps of okoume plywood for the sliding collar & trumpet end.

When gluing the 2 halves of the pole together with epoxy, stand on end so the line slot doesn't get plugged with epoxy. The round part of the pole is finished to 1 1/8" to 1 1/4" diameter. Take the corners off with a 1/2" round-over router bit. The sliding collar is 2 3/4" long x 2 3/8" diameter with the center 2" where the shock cord wraps around. Bore out with a 1 1/2" hole saw. Sand to taper at both ends.
If you are not handy with wood working or can't find the sitka spruce, I make the wood parts for $50. This includes the pole that is set up for a Harken or Natuos through deck pulley, the trumpet front end and sliding collar. If you are using a different through deck pulley, sent it to me so I can fit it. Also if you are worried about feeding the line through the pole you can send it also.
The wood pole launcher looks good and works well on wooden spars.