

## Mast climbing in *Johanna* – the un-aided way

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I confess; this little photo-article for the Yahoo JR group is mainly a way to show you the photos I took when first trying my modified bosun's chair in 2006. I don't claim that it is the only good way to climb a JR mast, but it surely works well for me.

Note: I am not an athlete – in fact I am closer to the lower end of the athlete scale ( b. 1954). Still, I claim that any normal man of about normal weight and with two arms can easily use it.

**I am not so sure of women – although they are often terribly fit, arm-strength is not their strongest side. (.. sorry girls – the truth is not always politically correct ☺ ...) Still, many women will make it too, I hope.**

The bosun's chair method I think is slightly less sensitive to the boat's rolling and pitching, than using ladders (hoisted rope-ladders) or using mast climbing irons ( ..depends on make of course...)



The standard bosun's chair with a sheet-lock added.

### How the bosun's chair is modified for self-hoisting:

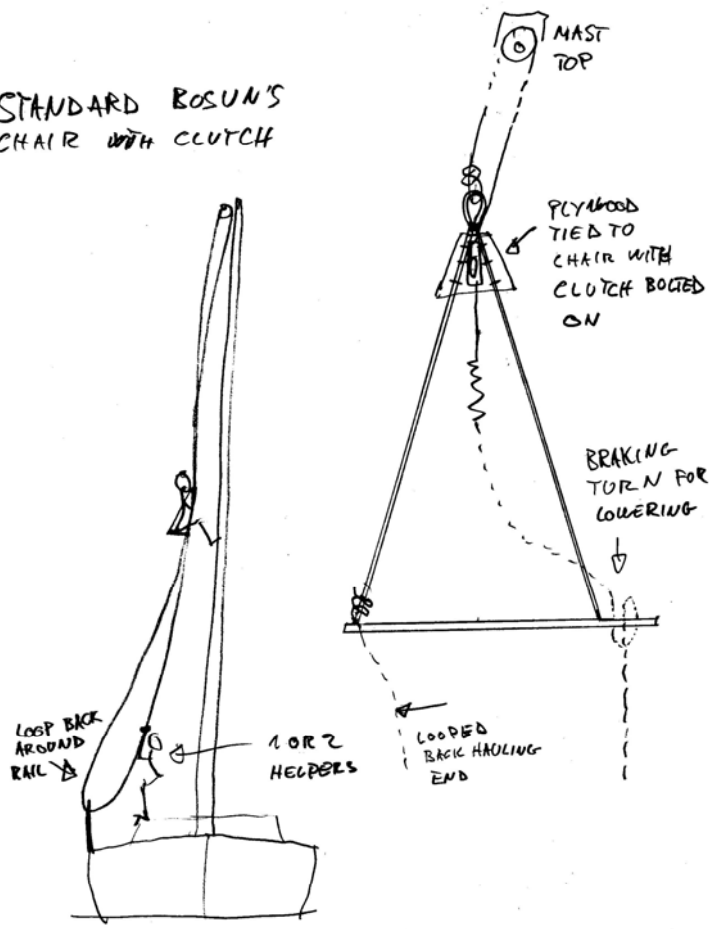
The key to this method is the addition of a sheet-lock to the standard bosun's chair. As will be seen, this lets the climber rest his/her arms between each pull. The sheet-lock fitted was a brand new one, not one that was tired, worn and unreliable. It was screwed to a little piece of 15mm plywood, which again was firmly laced to the lines of the chair.

The sheet lock's lever has 3 positions.

- Up position lets the rope run freely both ways.
- Mid position lets the rope run one way, but locks the other way
- Down position locks the rope both ways.

The original seat-extension on one side was meant to be drilled for carrying tools, but instead it now works as the brake when lowering oneself.

STANDARD BOSUN'S  
CHAIR WITH CLUTCH



18.6.06, Anne K.

This is how the chair is being hooked up.

Note that the tail of the hauling end of the rope is not allowed to pile up on deck where it can hook onto some gear and making the descend difficult. Instead it has been passed under the rail and back to the seat. Nice, safe and tidy.

The climbing rope is in fact *Johanna's* permanent spare halyard, running over a simple strong oversize block on the sb. side of the mast.

This setup also lets one receive hoisting help from crew on deck.



**Half-way up Johanna's mast**

**Climbing:**

Although the halyard is 1-part, when hoisting yourself it in fact becomes 2-part! The pull force needed in the rope is only half your weight, so it is not like trying to bodily climb a rope. The climb is of course done with the sheet-lock's lever in mid-position: I pull myself up, and the sheet-lock lets me rest without falling down again.



Yezz, made it!

**Working position:**

When reaching the position for the mast job, I lock the sheet-lock and also secure the hauling part to the extended end of the seat. Then both hands are free to work on the mast.



Perspective... who needs a dinghy with that...

### **Descend:**

The hauling part of the rope, coming out of the sheet-lock is passed one round around the extended seat and held there firmly by a gloved hand.

The sheet-lock's lever is moved to up/open position – and the chair sinks a bit as the brake takes over the load. Controlling the speed of descend has proven to be easy to learn, and I never feel uncomfortable with this. I can stop any time I like.

### **First time:**

**Of course, first time I tried the method, I tried the descend method from just a couple of feet above the deck. When I felt comfortable with that method (..use gloves!!), I went all the way up – slowly. The trick is to use a slow pace when climbing. The arm muscles may not be used to this work and would easily end up complaining the next day. When going up this spring, I bet the 10m trip took some 5 -10 minutes, but then there were no panting and no sore arms the next day. Instead, surprisingly, my legs were complaining: Due to a constant traffic of motor-boats that day, *Johanna* was rolling and also pitching a bit, so my feet were busy clinging to the mast. (.. mast climbing shoes/irons would not have been good here...). This spring the descend was much slower than the ascend, since I was polishing the mast on my way down. (..my main reason for going up...).**



Inside Johanna. Logging a good day's work.

**Safety:**

All climbing is a bit risky. I recommend having another crew around if possible – but it isn't always. The basic safety in climbing comes from being focused, and from being sure that everything (rope, block, shackles...) can take your load many times. In professional climbing, the bosun's chair is impossible to fall out of – even if one passes out. I don't go to this level – then kayaking would have to be forbidden too, or swimming. Just take it easy, don't hurry, and you'll be fine (..hopefully...).

Good luck!