

# Your Best Finish!

By

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Whether it's for being able to identify your boat from a distance, protecting the plastic from the sun, emulating your favorite livery or to express your own imagination, a good paint job is important to RC sailors. AMYA Fleet #241, aka the SundaySloopers of Central Florida are privileged to have Charles Samaha as a Lifetime Member and one of the most professional RC sailboat painters in the hobby. In this article we'll show you some examples of what is possible and provide you with information on what it takes to achieve a professional finish to assist you in your project.

## **Why paint at all?**

The Seawind, like many RC sailboats, is made from ABS which is a great material for a manufacturer to use that produces a fairly strong hull, economical prices and smooth surface. The downside of ABS is that it is susceptible to degradation from UV and other rays from the sun and other light sources. The result can be discoloration and potential weakening of the hull. For that reason alone, it makes sense to; at least, apply a basic coat of paint to the hull and deck. The same techniques in this article can also be used on fiberglass or carbon fiber hulls.



*Three Paint Scheme Choices*

The first step in the painting process is deciding on what you want the boat to look like. Many of us agree this can be either the easiest or hardest part of the process. Let's look at the choices:

1. A simple one color paint scheme can be beautiful and there is a nice selection of colors to make your boat unique. A single color is also obviously the easiest project for the beginning painter to tackle and is the most cost effective. Single colored hulls can also be enhanced with the use of decals.

2. Adding a second color to the hull, such as a stripe, does add a degree of difficulty to the project but can still be done by the non-professional.

3. Some famous boats, especially America's Cup Class boats, which the Seawind replicates, beg to have replicas of the big boats. Like replicas a unique design livery is the most challenging and costly to accomplish.

In writing this article we've tried to be as thorough as space permits without making it sound too difficult. As hard as we tried it still comes out a bit intimidating, so the one commodity you will need the most is patience. As co-author of this article, I painted my Seawind in the most basic way, with no primer, way too much spray paint and in too much humidity and too high a temperature. It looks OK (as long as I don't get too close to one of Charles' boats) and I win my share of races so, please take what you need from the article and go as far as you like.

## The Basics

The following is a recommended shopping list to help you get started on your project (ask your retailer to adequate substitutes):

- 3M 220 grade sand paper
- 6" foam sanding block
- latex or nitrile gloves
- Bull Dog Adhesion Promoter
- DuPont Sontara cloth
- Dupont First Clean
- 3M 233+ Masking Tape
- Dupli-Color Sandable Primer (two cans to be safe)
- 3M 400 grit sand paper
- Dupli-Color Spray color(s) of you choice (Dupli-Color paints come in either lacquer or enamel, choose one or the other but do not mix them)
- Dupli-Color Clear (can be used over lacquer or enamel)
- 2 Bottles Beer
- 3M Fine Line tape (optional)
- Green masking paper (optional)
- 3M Perfect-It Polishing Compound
- Eye and respiration protection
- Gobs of patience
- Common Sense – paints, thinners and most components of a paint job are chemicals so reading and following the label directions and cautions are a must

Many of the items on the list are available at most auto parts stores



### *Professional Finish Paint Products*

#### **Before You Start**

The preliminary stages can be done at most any time but especially during painting process temperature and humidity are as important and surface prep. Ideally the humidity should be about 80% or bit lower (low humidity can cause paint to dry too quickly and result in a dull, grainy finish) and the temperature range is from 65-90 degrees F, particularly not higher.

For the true beginner, it may be advisable to tryout the techniques on a scrap piece of plastic before you tackle your hull.

#### **Surface Preparation**

Regardless of which paint scheme you choose, the beginning stages are the same. A large portion of your time will be spent on preparation of the hull surface.

- Start with 220 grade sand paper on a 6" foam sanding block to smooth and true the entire hull. Using long longitudinal (down the long axis of the hull) strokes with light pressure letting the sand paper true up any large imperfections. Sanding without a block can cause finger ridges or wavy lines in your final paintjob.
- Once the hull is smooth it is time to put on a pair of latex or nitrile gloves, because sweat and finger oils prevent good adhesion of any finish. Use an air gun/can to blow all of the sanding dust away.

## Hull Cleaning

- Using a lint free DuPont Sontara cloth clean every part of the hull with DuPont First Clean to remove any foreign oils or mold release from the manufacturing of the hull.
- Use a high grade masking tape to tape off the areas you do not want to paint. The blue 3M tape you can purchase from your local hardware store is designed to be used in painting houses and does not work well for this process.
- Spray 2 light coats of Bull Dog Adhesion promoter to any surface that will now be painted and let dry for 10 minutes between coats.

## Paint Application (Single Color)



*Blue Hull (after over 12 months of sailing)*

For the DIY process the best results can be achieved by using Dupli-Color primers and paints. Now this is where the fun comes in:

- Apply 3 coats of Dupli-Color sandable primer. Make sure to put wet even coats down allowing 15 minutes of drying time between coats, do not rush the process. *A wet coat is still a thin coat of paint but enough so the paint appears wet when put down. Too thick of a coat will produce runs and promote orange peel. It's advisable to try a few practice sprays to get the rate of application down right.*
- After the third coat is applied let the primer cure for 2 hours.
- Go back with the foam sanding block and 400 grade sandpaper to now make the hull perfectly smooth. Once again use long strokes and light pressure. Once you are happy with the surface (remember take your time an imperfection in the primer will be 4 times more noticeable when painted) blow it off with compressed air and wipe it again with a Sontara cloth and First Clean.
- Now it is time for the color coat using the color of your choice. Spray even wet overlapping coats letting the paint dry 15 minutes between coats (it is a good idea to start spraying before you hit the boat and spray past the boat). Do not



rush it! Wait the 15 minutes and lay down another coat and wait another 15 minutes.

- Now apply 2 even wet coats of Dupli-Color Clear waiting 15 minutes between coats. Now you can peel off the gloves and have a beer. Let the paint cure for 12 hours before handling the hull.
- In 2 days you can use some 3M Perfect-It polishing compound and bring the gloss out in the paint. Cheaper polishing compounds contain carnauba wax which is not desirable for fast sailing.

### Paint Application (Multiple Colors)



*A quad-color hull*

The big trick with applying a second color is the type of masking tape you use. Standard masking tape leaves rough lines and an inconsistent tape line. Use 3M Fine Line tape which is designed for this process, applied to the hull and burnished (rubbed down) with light even pressure.

- Use your 233+ masking and green masking paper to cover any areas not to be painted with the second color. Make sure the tape is well burnished and all openings in the paper are taped shut to prevent overspray from entering the masked off area.
- Spray the second color using light coats once again waiting 15 minutes between coats. After an hour slowly remove the masking tape to reveal your work.
- Now apply 2 even wet coats of Dupli-Color Clear waiting 15 minutes between coats.
- Now you can peel off the gloves and have a beer. Let the paint cure for 12 hours before handling the hull.
- In 2 days you can use some 3M Perfect-It polishing compound and bring the gloss out in the paint.

## Custom Paint Schemes



*Custom Livery on CE Hull*

The previous mentioned finishing process used acrylic air dry lacquer and enamel paints which provide a nice finish. But, if you want the ultimate you need to use catalyzed epoxy urethane finishes. In addition, a shaker can will only get you so far in trying to achieve special effects like the fade shown on the Oracle boat. These paints are usually a 3 part epoxy mix and need to be sprayed out of a high end paint gun and are toxic to breath during the application process and require an especially designed respirator for breathing. This process is one only a professional painter should do for you, and the colors that are available are only limited by your imagination unlike the color selection at the auto parts store. You can airbrush any design you want from extremely wild to make your favorite America's Cup Yacht replica.

The SundaySloopers have a forum on our website [www.SundaySloopers.com](http://www.SundaySloopers.com) which is an excellent place to ask more questions about this article and checkout our excellent venue. Charles has a site [www.latitude24designs.com](http://www.latitude24designs.com) for more information, instruction and pictures of some even more beautifully painted boats. Our hope is that you found this article helpful and you are successful in your project.

Fair sailing!



*A custom project in the water*