

Editor's Note: Those of you who are familiar with Greg Vasileff's boats know that he is one of the best model boat building craftsmen in New England. His paint work is exceptional. The article that follows is one that I picked up from a posting he made on the Yahoo Soling One Meter Forum. It's (obviously) slanted towards painting Solings, but the principles apply to any and all classes.

Greg V's Painting Hints

By Greg Vasileff

My recipe for a great paint finish is the following:

First, I have to say that the way to an ultra smooth and shiny finish is not in a clear coat, it's in the handwork that precedes and follows your final coat of paint.

The first step is to check out your hull, looking for flaws in the molding. The Soling's hull is made of ABS plastic and ABS sands well so you can sand out the flaws, or fair them out with an epoxy such as West System. DO NOT use a Bondo type auto body filler! This type of filler absorbs water and will deteriorate quickly.

OK, at this point your boat should be completely assembled (except for the rigging). That is, the hull and deck should be glued together and all of the interior work you need to do should be done. You don't want to complete a beautiful paint job before you start working on the interior stuff because you'll end up scratching the paint, so make sure you have as much done as possible.

Once you have the boat completely sanded (the rudder and keel are done separately) you are ready to prime. This is a very important foundation coat that you cannot skip!

I use spray cans for all primer and paint on my boats. The primer I use now is Rust-Oleum Auto Sandable Primer. It's new to their line and can be found at Wal-Mart. It has a red and gray label with a gray top, and a fan spray tip that works well. I used to use Duplicolor auto paints, but they changed their label and I have yet to find the proper kind again. Look for Duplicolor at Wal-Mart and auto-parts stores. Use gray sandable primer-filler, not primer-sealer. For paint, I use either Duplicolor or 12 Minute Krylon. Either will work well with this primer.

Hang your boat up so the deck is at about shoulder height. I find that the best way to hang a Soling is by running a wire or string down through the jib fairlead and back up through the main fairlead. If you

don't have fairleads on the boat you'll just have to get creative.

Unless your deck and hull are different colors, you'll want to spray the whole boat at the same time. Spray on your primer-filler back and forth over the boat evenly until you have built up a good, even layer of primer over the entire boat. (Never press or release the spray can nozzle when it is aimed directly at the boat.)

Let this primer dry for at least an hour (it dries very fast). Now take the boat outside with a water hose, or into the shower with you, (I have done both) and WET-SAND the boat with no less than 600 grit wet sandpaper. (*Editor's Note: I begged Greg for a photo of him and his Soling in the shower but was politely turned down.*) You should sand until the white plastic is beginning to show through the grey primer in many places.

You can then start to see where you may need to fill scratches, pinholes, dings, or poorly faired joints. To do this I use a product (also available at Wal-Mart) called Bondo Glazing and Spot Putty. This stuff used to be called "Red Lead," but it is now considered safe because it contains no lead. I just use my finger and fill any of these flaws — nothing bigger than a scratch with this stuff because it is not a filler. Let it dry for 30-60 minutes and wet-sand with 600 until it's almost gone.

Now start the process over again (and again) (and again) if you need to. Just make sure that when the last coat of primer is wet-sanded that no white of the ABS plastic shows through.

Try to be careful with your last sanding. You may want to sand this last time with 800 or even 1500 grit.

Once you are completely satisfied with the fairing and priming you've done, it's time to paint.

Make sure the hull is dry and clear of dust or lint. Now, it's your decision if you

want to do two (or more) colors. If it were me, I would paint the whole boat one color and then go back and mask off the second color on top of the first.

Painting. Paint the entire hull with one coat of paint. I start spraying evenly over the whole boat just so it starts to cover the primer. By the time I have gotten all the way around, I can start over again right away. I don't want the paint to dry much at all before I'm done. The second time around I load that paint up a bit heavier and maybe the third time around I really load it up good. The important part here is that you need to watch your over-spray. Duplicolor dries very fast, so you need to load on the paint. It's a fine line to load on just enough before it's too much and starts to sag. I find that the Duplicolor resists this better than most. You're done when you can stand back and see nothing but glossy paint, no hazy, frosty look should be anywhere. If it is, then you've over-sprayed. I find that it's easier to deal with over-spray later than now, but try to not to over-spray in the first place.

Let the boat dry for an hour at the very least, two to three is better.

Now wet-sand the boat with 1500-2000 grit. Go easy on the corners and the edges. You can always repaint if you mess up, but if you do, then the entire boat should be done over. After wet-sanding, I use Dupont Polishing Compound following their directions.

If I put on a waterline with tape, or letters or numbers, I do so before the compounding. In fact I put them on after wet-sanding and then I wet-sand again with them on. Makes a big difference. After this step the shine really begins to show. Follow-up with 3M Hand Glazing and WOW, if you have done it all right, I'll guarantee a big smile!

Finish the job with teflon® boat polish, but watch out, it wants to slip out of your hands!