

## Applying 29er Sail Numbers

By Oliver Scutt



29er sail numbers are a source of frustration to race officers, owners and perhaps photographers alike.

For race officers, the black sail numbers can be very hard to read against the shiny surface, and legibility is compromised by the transparent nature of the sail e.g. NED and DEN can look remarkably similar when transposed and viewed from the other side.

For owners, the lucky ones in the top 25 at Worlds get the honor of carrying their world's position on their sail until the next worlds, after which they probably need to peel off the numbers and replace them again. In addition, the trade in second hand sails means that the new sail owners are required to remove and replace the old numbers with those of their own boat.

From a photographer's aesthetic perspective, I would suggest that the 29ers have the most motley and drunkenly orientated set of sail numbers of any fleet which is disappointing.

The 29er rules make sail number size and positioning rather delicate. There is only just enough space to fit the country code and numbers between the second and third batten pockets, especially for boats in the 2000+ range.

Furthermore, sail numbers are not cheap to buy, and may be hard to find in the requisite black color. To make matters worse, I personally find the universal '8' style numbering as ugly as it is convenient, so here is how I do it.

I cut my own 230mm/9" numbers from Insignia cloth. Insignia cloth is self-adhesive. I buy mine at Seattle Fabrics. <http://www.seattlefabrics.com/marine.html#insignia%20cloth>

I use a template of sail number characters originally produced in Microsoft Publisher using WordArt. The characters are minimum height, and use a slightly narrowed version of the Arial Black font. <http://www.29ernorthamerican.org/howto/29erSailNumbers9inchLTR.pdf>

My other trick for clear Mylar 29er sails is to use masking tape on the rear of the transparent sail to help align the numbers that I stick on. Ideally you use three lines of masking tape per side, but one is possible, preferably in the center, hence the horizontal line on my paper template.

Tools required are:

- My pdf template for sail numbers
- Sharp scissors
- 2" wide masking tape (the 2" width helps with spacing which is a minimum of 45mm/1.77")
- Marker pen or pencil for tracing outlines onto the insignia cloth
- A long ruler, ideally longer than 12"
- Acetone or Goof-off to clean up adhesive

The steps are:

1. Print selected pages from my pdf template for your country and hull number onto letter size paper, then cut out them.
2. Trace the outline onto the Insignia cloth, making sure you transpose the letters if you choose to trace them on the back of the cloth
3. Cut out the letters. You will need sharp scissors and to periodically clean them with acetone to get the adhesive off the blades.
4. Transfer the center point line to the front of the freshly cut out sail numbers using a pencil. This is used for alignment later.
5. Prepare the sail to position the letters. **Do the port side (lower characters) first**, working upwards from, and parallel to, the 3<sup>rd</sup> batten pocket. Put one side of a strip of masking tape on the starboard side that will become the centerline for the sail numbers on the port side, and then add two other strips for what will become the top and bottom alignment lines.
6. Starting at the minimum distance from leech (2") on the port side, lay out the characters. After sticking on each character, use another piece of 2" masking tape to ensure proper spacing between characters. This is easier if you also have top and bottom lines of masking tape to help position each letter.
7. Now do the starboard side characters, after putting the masking tape guides on the port side first, and leaving at least 2" of spacing vertically between the lines.