



The Clean Boat



Collins Bay Marina
STAFF

Outline

- Terminology: Cleaning; Cleaning/Polishing; Waxing
- Why clean, polish and wax?
- What items are required?
- Products that are effective and least labour intensive
- Techniques for cleaning, polishing and waxing
- Common tips for do's and don'ts
- Questions





Introduction

- Boats are objects of that enable us to experience pleasure and fun that we can choose to do alone or share with family and friends. A boat is also a significant asset into which many of us pour money and time. If we are to preserve and enhance the value of this asset, it needs to be maintained. Part of ongoing maintenance includes adequate cleaning and protection of the boat's various surfaces.
- Surfaces that tend to get the most attention are the topsides: that area of the hull extending from the water line to the deck. This is a portion of the boat that tends to get very dirty and where the gelcoat tends towards oxidation if not kept properly cleaned and protected. The average gelcoat portion of a fiberglass boat is twenty thousandths of an inch thick, or about the thickness of the cover of a book of matches. Proper maintenance of this surface can greatly enhance the appearance and the durability of this surface. Improper maintenance, or neglect, can cause extensive damage to this surface that is difficult and expensive to repair.

Terminology

- We often use to terms related to cleaning our boats in a very imprecise manner. We sometimes refer to polishing the boat when we really intend to refer to waxing the boat. It important to use the correct that correspond to the appropriate action of cleaning, polishing and waxing.
- Washing the boat refers to using an appropriate boat wash product that has been added to a source of clean water and that is applied to the surface by hand to remove excessive dirt and grime. While washing the boat is a useful and a value-added activity, the result is not usually a clean boat or, at any rate, a boat that is clean enough for the application of wax.
- Cleaning/polishing the boat refers to applying a chemical cleaner/polish to the surface of the gelcoat. The cleaner/polish accomplishes a deeper cleaning of the gelcoat than does washing the surface with a boat wash and water. The gelcoat is not perfectly smooth with the upper surface characterized by scratches, crevices and imperfections in which dirt, pollutants and biological matter make their home. The cleaner/polish removes these invaders of the gelcoat leaving the surface truly clean and dirt free. However, if this clean and imperfect surface is left unsealed and unprotected, the foreign material will begin to repopulate the crevices and imperfections in the gelcoat in very short order.
- Wax is a material that is a sealant and a protection for the gelcoat. Waxes are produced in liquid form, in a soft paste form and in a hard paste form. An application of wax fills in the imperfections in the gelcoat thus preventing the intrusion of dirt and other matter. The wax seals the gelcoat and causes the surface to shine in a way that is pleasing to the eye. A shiny gelcoat is a plus, but it's really the protection that the wax affords the gelcoat that is the great advantage.

Why Clean and Wax?

The answer to this is fairly obvious. Boats operate in a marine environment and are exposed to elements in the air and the water that can cause surfaces to degrade over time. Our boats are only in the water part of the year, and they are on the hard the remainder of the year. If the fiberglass surfaces are not cleaned and maintained, the surface begins to show signs of oxidation in that the surface loses its shine, becomes dull and a fine residue or chalk like powder appears. This is indicative of the surface of the gelcoat beginning to break down. If this condition is allowed to persist, normal cleaning and waxing won't be able to restore the gelcoat to its original condition. The remedy now becomes compounding the surface with much more invasive and aggressive products that will actually reduce the thickness of the already thin layer of gelcoat. The best, easiest and cheapest approach is to avoid this situation altogether by beginning and maintaining an ongoing program of regular cleaning and waxing.

Items Required to Maintain Gelcoat

- It isn't necessary to have a truck load of various items and products in order to maintain the gelcoat of your boat. For washing the gelcoat, you will need a bucket, a wash mitt, a hose with a nozzle, and a source of clean water. Once the boat has been washed and rinsed with clean water, the boat can be left to dry naturally or a natural chamois can be used to dry the boat.
- For the cleaning/polishing process, one requires a cleaner/polisher product and multiple microfiber cloths. For the average size boat (30 feet) one should have at least a dozen or so clean cloths on hand. The cloths manufactured by Simonize and available from Canadian Tire are highly recommended. If possible, purchase the packs of cloths that come in various colours as this is a good visual cue for remembering what colour was used to apply the product and what colour was used to remove the product.
- For the waxing process, one requires a high-quality wax, microfiber cloths, and, as an option, a high quality random orbital buffer and pads. Hand buffing the wax will result in a better outcome than using a small underpowered mechanical buffer. If one prefers to mechanically buff the wax, a very good quality random orbital buffer with the appropriate selection of pads is highly recommended. A high-powered direct drive buffer can do an excellent job but it is very easy to cause damage to the gelcoat if one is not very proficient in its use. A random orbital buffer is much easier for the average person to use and it is almost impossible to damage the gelcoat surface with this type of a buffer.



Efficient and Effective Products

An unfortunate fact regarding boat cleaning and maintenance is that it does require effort and time. The good news is that the amount of time and effort required can be significantly reduced by the selection and use of efficient and effective products.

Starbrite Boat Wash is a very good product for washing the entire boat down. It effectively removes superficial dirt and grime from most areas including the deck, cockpit and topsides. When added to clean water as directed and applied with a soft brush, this cleaning operation requires minimal effort. The Starbrite product for nonskid areas is also highly recommended.

When it comes to the cleaning/polishing stage of the process, the condition of the gelcoat dictates the choice of product to be used. For gelcoat that is relatively clean with no or only minor signs of surface oxidation, Collinite 920 cleaner/polish is recommended. This is a very effective liquid product that is gentle on the surface and easy to apply. A small amount of this product applied to a microfiber cloth will clean a two-foot square section of the boat. Once applied, it is removed with a separate clean cloth as soon as it begins to form a haze. It is important that all residue of this product is removed before applying wax.

If the gelcoat is relatively dirty and show signs of mild to moderate oxidation of the surface, Rolite cleaner/polish is recommended. Rolite is a product that has the consistency and texture of a very soft paste. It is a bit more abrasive than Collonite 920 and can therefore clean and polish a dirtier hull with about the same amount of effort associated with using Collinite 920. A small amount of Rolite applied to a microfiber cloth will clean a two-foot square area.

Once applied, it is removed with a clean cloth as soon as it begins to form a haze. Once again, it is very important that all traces of this product be removed from the gelcoat surface prior to applying any wax. Two applications of Rolite may be necessary in areas where stubborn stains are encountered.



Star brite®
INSTANT **Hull Cleaner**
Nettoyant pour coque
Scum Line & Stain Remover
Supprime les taches et ligne d'écume

#1
EASY TO USE
FACILE SOIN À UTILISER



DANGER
CORROSIVE/CORROSIIF
NET 32 U.S. fl. oz./950 ml





Efficient and Effective Products II

If the gelcoat surface displays more than moderate oxidation with significant fading and chalking, a product called Buff Magic may be useful. This is a kind of very mild compounding material that is manufactured by the Shurhold company in the U.S. This product is best applied with a powered buffer. The Shurhold company has several videos describing and demonstrating the appropriate use of this product. Viewing these videos is highly recommended before using this product. This product is very effective in removing moderate plus oxidation although two applications are often required. If this product cannot produce the desired outcome, the job is best left to the restoration professionals. At any rate, bringing back gelcoat from this level of damage often involves wet sanding the surface as part of a very time consuming and labour-intensive operation.

When it comes to sealing and protecting the newly cleaned gelcoat, Collinite Fleet Paste Wax is a product that yields excellent results. Although paste wax conjures up images of back breaking and arm fatiguing activity, this product is relatively easy to apply. It is best applied to the clean surface with a spongy applicator but a clean microfiber cloth works almost as well. Simply apply a thin coat of wax over an area ensuring that the entire area has a coating of wax on it. Once the wax begins to set it causes a haze to form. This is when a clean microfiber cloth is used to remove the excess wax from the surface. It is important to remove all of the excess wax. A second clean microfiber cloth can be used to quickly buff the surface and to bring up the final shine. If Rolite or Buff Magic have been used to deep clean the surface and to remove oxidation, it is recommended that two coats of Fleet Wax be applied to ensure a good level of sealing and protection of the gelcoat surface.

The use of a mechanical buffer can be advantageous if the buffer is of sufficient power to really warm the wax and thus help work the wax into the imperfections of the surface. The buffer does provide a mechanical advantage but this appliance can become heavy after several hours of use. The other disadvantage of using a buffer is that it's difficult to feel feedback from the buffing operation. When hand buffing, the lessening of resistance as the wax is spread and removed provides valuable feedback regarding how the wax is going on and the quality of the coverage that is being achieved. This feedback is not possible with the mechanical buffer. In this operation, the feedback from the hand is more accurate than the feedback from the eye.



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RECOMMENDED PRODUCT USE



| | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| Buff Magic Pad (Wool or Foam) & Buff Magic | Pro Polish Pad & Pro Polish | Microfiber Bonnet |
| Speed Setting: 3-5 | Speed Setting: 2-3 | Speed Setting: 1-2 |

SURFACE CONDITION

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| BAD Sun Faded Surface Surface Scratches Rough & Oxidized | STEP 1 2-3 Passes to Remove Surface Defects w/ Buff Magic Pad & Buff Magic | STEP 2 Protect and Seal by Working in Pro Polish with Pro Polish Pad | STEP 3 Buff out Pro Polish to a Showroom Shine with Microfiber Bonnet |
| AVERAGE Light Chalking Swirl Marks Light Scratches | STEP 1 1 Pass to Remove Surface Defects with Buff Magic Pad and Buff Magic | STEP 2 Protect and Seal by Working in Pro Polish with Pro Polish Pad | STEP 3 Buff out Pro Polish to a Showroom Shine with Microfiber Bonnet |
| NEW No Swirl Marks No Scratches No Haziness | STEP 1 Go to Step 2 | STEP 2 Protect and Seal by Working in Pro Polish with Pro Polish Pad | STEP 3 Buff out Pro Polish to a Showroom Shine with Microfiber Bonnet |

Please note: Recommended Product Use Chart is for general guidelines. Each situation may vary.
For proper care of pads, use Shurhold's Serious Pad Cleaner.

CHECK OUT THE COMPLETE SYSTEM SHURHOLD.COM

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POLISHER ACCESSORIES



- 3151 6½" Buff Magic Pad (2 pack).
- 3152 6½" Pro Polish Pad (2 pack).
- 3153 6½" Microfiber Bonnet.
- 3154 6½" Buff Magic Foam Pad (2 pack).
- 3201 5" Fine Scrubber Pad.
- 3202 5" Medium Scrubber Pad.
- 3203 5" Coarse Scrubber Pad.
- 3210 5" Magic Wool Buffing Pad (2 pack).
- 3205 6½" Stiff Brush.
Most abrasive brush available.
- 3206 6½" Medium Brush.
Moderately abrasive brush.
- 3207 6½" Soft Brush.
For safe use on most surfaces.



- 30803 12 oz. *Serious Pad Cleaner*.
Scientifically formulated to
rejuvenate buffing pads.
- 270 *Utility Brush*. Perfect for buffing
pads, upholstery, floor mats, vinyl,
canvas, etc. & more.

Washing, Cleaning & Polishing, and Waxing Techniques

To some extent we have already touched on some of the basic techniques of gelcoat cleaning and protection. The actual application of the various products is relatively simple and straight forward. There are certain techniques that may help you effectively ration your time and energy as you approach the challenge of cleaning your boat.

A good practice is to start with the most challenging parts of the job while you are your freshest and have the most energy. On most boats the boot stripes, at the bottom of the topsides closest to the water, and the stern of the vessel are the parts of the boat that will require the most cleaning. As a matter of practice, we often will use Rolite cleaner polish for the boot stripes and hand apply two coats of Fleet wax to these stripes. This makes the cleaning of this area a little easier and the two coats of wax will provide adequate protection for the season. At our marina, the slips are oriented east to west. This means that one side of the boat faces north while the other side faces south. Usually, the side that faces south will be dirtier and exhibit at least slight oxidation as compared with the other side and will therefore require a bit more effort to clean and wax.

It is also useful to separate the cleaning and waxing into doable chunks. The weather in the spring is especially changeable on short notice. It is good practice to clean and polish a certain amount of the topsides, for example, the distance between two of the deck stanchions. Once this area has been cleaned, it's a good idea to then wax and seal the area before beginning the next chunk of cleaning. If the weather turns bad, or if you run out of steam, you can cease work knowing that you have completed that which you started. If you are unable to wax an area that you have cleaned at the end of a session of work, it is very likely that you will have to clean this area again before sealing the surface as it takes no time at all for dirt and pollutants to invade your newly cleaned surface.

Washing, Cleaning&Polishing, and Waxing Techniques II

We have spoken about products and tools but we have not yet spoken about ladders, benches, and scaffolding. Canadian Tire sells a small aluminum bench that is an excellent platform from which to clean and wax boot stripes that cannot be easily addressed while standing on the ground. Standing on a platform is much less hard on the body, and much less fatiguing, than standing on the rungs of a ladder for hours on end. The ground on which many of our boats are stored is not very level thus the use of a stepladder is strongly discouraged. Although one can use a ladder with pads on it so as not to damage the boat, there is always a temptation to reach too far instead of moving the ladder when required. This can lead to serious negative consequences and is not recommended. The safest working platform is a small mobile scaffolding. These scaffolds can be purchased or rented as required from local rental stores. The advantage of these devices is that one has a stable platform from which to work that can easily accommodate the worker and his tools and products. It is very important to properly situate these platforms and to lock the wheels in position. Working from these platforms makes a difficult task much easier and much safer.

While it is difficult to specify the exact amount of any product to use, it is important that a sufficient amount of product is applied. If too little product is applied, the amount of effort required to clean, polish and wax increases significantly. There must be enough product applied so that the product is doing the bulk of the work with your assistance. If you find yourself working really hard, use a bit more product. However, using too much product can also be a problem. If you use excessive amounts of product, removing the excess residue from the gelcoat surface greatly increases the amount of physical effort required. You may find that you think you have removed all the residue from the cleaned surface but, if you step back and look down the hull, you will be able to discern a definite haze lingering on the gelcoat. This must be removed before waxing or the finished product will look splotchy and uneven. Experiment until you get the feel of how much is enough and what is too much. Mastering this will allow you to conserve energy and time while producing the best possible result.

Common Cleaning and Waxing Tips

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As mentioned earlier, cleaning, polishing and waxing our boats is a bit of a challenge and requires an investment of time, energy and money. By following a few common-sense tips, we can help to reduce the amount of investment required to produce the desired outcome.

The best temperature range for the best performance of many of these products is from 15C to 20C. Try to work within this temperature band if possible.

If the weather is colder than 15C, or warmer than 20C, clean smaller areas of the hull and take particular care in “feathering” one area into another.

Try not to work in the direct sunlight. If one side of your boat faces west, work on that side in the morning and work on the east facing side in the afternoon.

Throw away cleaning and buffing cloths as they become saturated with product. Dirty cloths increase the level of effort required to do the job.

Common Cleaning and Waxing Tips II

Bring lots of water and keep well hydrated during your work.

Wear appropriate clothing, including a hat, to avoid issues with sunburn.



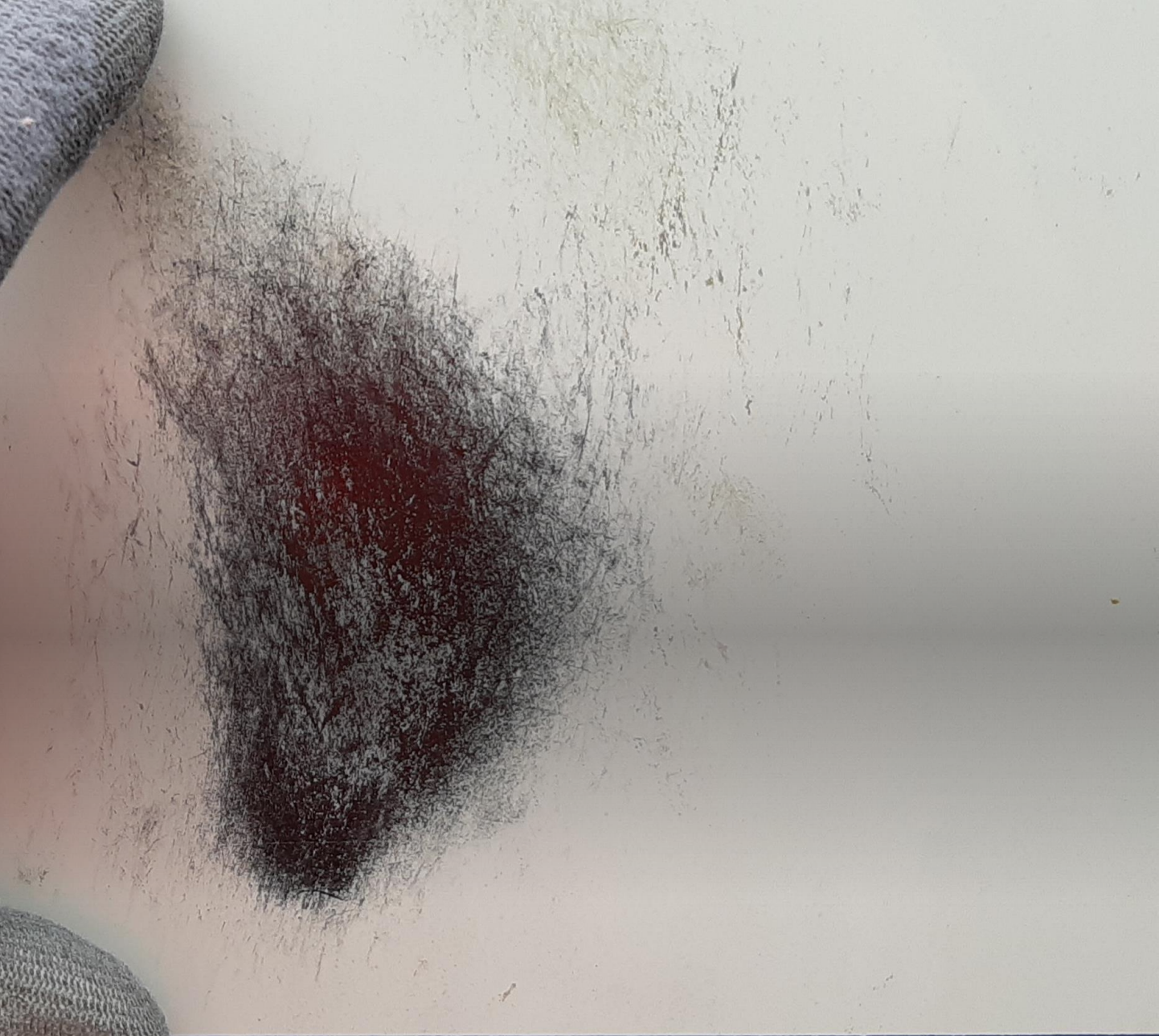
Do not use household cleaners such as detergents, Vim, steel wool and other products on your boat. Initial pleasing results will be replaced by evidence of damage caused over the long term.

Try to put your boat away clean. If it's not possible to do this, try to clean and wax at least the boot stripes and the stern as this will make your work in the spring much easier.

Once your boat is launched, don't forget about your cockpit and deck areas. The same products and techniques used on your topsides work extremely well on these areas too.

Do not apply wax to antiskid areas. There are specific products for these areas.

Use the proper products for surfaces that have been repainted.



Does Bottom Paint work?

Speedwell illustrates growth after the 2020 season where no BottomKote was applied.





The famous Best Buffer Trophy

Questions?



Collins Bay Marina
STAFF

