

XO training for blockades

(by Antonella of Malachite Ocean)

Even if you've had XO experience in flotillas or SMHs (Sea Monster Hunts), blockade XOing is much more complicated mostly due to the fact that a blockade XO has many different responsibilities. These responsibilities, if carried out correctly, ensure the smooth running of a ship during a blockade so that the battle navigator is focused in nothing else but the battle navigation.

XO stands for Executive Officer and basically the XO is the officer in charge of the management of the ship. So what does the management of a ship consist of? Well, especially in blockades there are a number of things that have to be checked and managed properly for the ship to work smoothly. If you have XOed in a blockade you will have no problem XOing a flotilla or a SMH, or even a large pillage. The opposite however, is not true.

In blockades, each XO is usually paired up with a battle navigator and they work together through the whole of the blockade. However, depending on the number of battle navigators, the number of XOs and their availability during the blockade, this might change. So if at a point you are asked to XO for another battle navigator than the one originally paired up with you, don't think it's weird or you didn't do a good job. Be flexible and accept the new assignment.

The XO gets orders from the LA (Land Admiral) and the JC (Jobbing Contact) for different reasons. The LA assigns which ship the battle navigator/XO pair will get and the JC co-ordinates the number of jobbers the ships must have. Usually the JC will hop on the ship currently loading to accept jobbing applications, but after another ship starts loading the XO might have to take over that task according to the number of jobbers their ship has. So again depending on the number of jobbers on your ship you might get instructed to either post a job offer or take down the job offer.

When your ship is assigned to you, there are some things you need to check to make sure the ship is ready to enter the blockade. The first and most important thing you need to check is if the ship is battle ready and set to blockade mode. How do you do that? It's very simple. If you look at the right hand side of your screen where the vessel information is you can check both things. Here are some pictures to help you visualize it.



Pic. 1

In Pic. 1(a) inside the red circle you see the indicator that your ship should have in order to be battle ready. In Pic. 1(b) you can see the different voyage type indicators that exist. The

blockade indicator is the one pointed by the red arrow. The voyage type indicator can be found in the vessel information area next to the speed meter.

If the ship is not battle ready then it must be set from the Navigation table of the ship. If the ship is not set to blockade mode, then it must be set from the ship's wheel. The ship being set to blockade mode is very important because if it's not you'll have a lot of angry jobbers that didn't get paid for an entire round and that is a very messy situation for you and it gives bad reputation to your flag. So MAKE SURE THE SHIP IS SET TO BLOCKADE!!! 😊

After we take care of the stuff above we need to check that our ship is properly stocked. To do that we check the ship's hold. It must have appropriate number of rum and shot and also appropriate type of shot. It has happened before to take a war brig in a blockade with large cannon balls. Not good!! You can get the exact number of rum and shot from the land admiral or stock manager. It is very common for some battle navigators to ask for additional shot. This really depends on the battle navigator's style and how much he shoots. So be ready to accept the additional shot from the stock manager if needed.

While the flow of jobbers hopping on your ship is increasing you must make sure you repeatedly identify yourself as the XO using the /shout command so that people will know to whom to direct questions and gunning requests. Remember, you are in charge of the ship and you need to make your jobbers feel safe and show them that you actually know what you are doing. I also try to entertain jobbers while doing the complicated XOing job. So for example I would identify myself like this: "Welcome aboard mates!! XYZ will be your naughty naver and I will be your hawt XO!!!"

After you have identified yourself you must start looking for gunners. I usually have 3 gunners on a war brig and 4 on a war frig and I usually ask for renowned and above. If you find it difficult to get gunners with these stats ask for gunners with lower stats but do not go below master. I also do not give gunning orders to people that claim they have the required stat on another pirate on another ocean etc, etc. I want to see the stat on the pirate I have in front of me. If you still find it hard to get gunners from your current jobbers' pool don't hesitate to ask in crew chat if there are any excess gunners on other ships that can help you out. It is good to send a tell to your battle navigator giving him the gunners' names so that he doesn't have to worry about them. Once on the blockade board and depending on how fast the guns get loaded and how much your battle navigator is shooting, you might need to find additional gunners and/or gun yourself so be prepared and do not panic.

So now everything is ready. The ship is battle ready and set to blockade mode, the stock is there, we have our gunners and our jobbers are stationed (hopefully). So we enter the blockade board. Make sure you give the following warnings:

- 1) All boochers will be planked (however do not plank boochers if you enter the board just before a break)
- 2) Nobody should be found in the crow's nest
- 3) Everybody must remain stationed at all times otherwise they don't get paid
- 4) Lazars will be warned and then planked
- 5) Tell them not to TH (treasure haul) unless instructed so (in case of sinking PvP blockades or BK (brigand king) blockades).

Of course things are never perfect so you will have people not stationing or THing when they're not supposed to. So, how to discipline them? What I suggest is that you never use whistles unless there is mass lazing or an urgent need to fill a specific station (usually carp). Whistles tend to annoy most jobbers especially the ones that are stationed and working hard.

So the steps I take to make sure the naughty ones get to station are the following:

- 1) Shout their names in vessel chat. Some of them might feel embarrassed by the public reprimand and station.
- 2) If they continue to laze, send them a tell. This is useful because if someone is idle you will see that if you send them a tell.
- 3) If the tell doesn't work either you send them a personal order by clicking their name in the jobbers' list under in the vessel tab and choosing a station. In that way they will get a message that for example: "XXX has ordered you do to some sailing".
- 4) If the personal order does not work either you give them a final warning in vessel chat, wait a while and if they are still not stationed PLANK them!!

Especially in BK blockades we cannot tolerate lazars. In other instances lazars do not get paid, but in BK blockades, everybody gets a cut from buoys controlled, from BK ships sank and from TH. So you must make sure that the only people not stationed at a time on your ship are yourself and your gunners. Of course you might need to puzzle yourself at some point depending on the condition of the ship and the number of jobbers on board, but you must make sure not to neglect the rest of your XOing responsibilities.

You must remember when there is a break to check the DR (duty report). If you are stationed the DR pops up automatically when there's a break, but if you're not stationed you cannot see it automatically. To see the DR when you are not stationed you need to press the Esc button. If you press it again the DR will be removed. As we mentioned above boochers must be planked. Some people also plank Learning, however I don't do that because Learning can contribute to some point but the most important reason is that we plank only those we cannot afford to keep aboard. If I plank all the boochers, learning and poor then I'll have to plank half the ship and it's not fun to be on a blockade board understaffed. So plank but wisely.

Also, during a break make sure you praise your jobbers for their excellent effort. This makes them feel good about themselves, it boosts their morale and makes them work even better and harder (of course the pay helps too :p). I also tend to entertain them a bit. Like for example if there is damage to the ship I shout something like: "extra cookiez for the carpers if they get the damage down!!" Blockade is about having fun too you know.

Another important thing an XO must do is walk around the ship and check jobbers especially green ones. If a green jobber is idle on a station it will show Learning in the DR. However, this jobber did not work at all. We do not want such jobbers so if you find any, plank away. In case someone disconnects I do not plank them immediately. I give them some time to reconnect. If that doesn't happen then unfortunately they must be planked but I notify the JC to rejob them as soon as they are reconnected.

During a round you must provide regular damage reports to the LA. That is, percentage of damage and percentage of bilge. In this way, everybody knows in what state your ship is in. If the damage percentage is high your ship is in risk of sinking. If your bilge percentage is also high

this means that you are also low on moves, so the situation is even worse. In any case the LA must know in what shape your ship is in, so as to prepare another ship on which your jobbers can hop on if yours sinks and whether another ship will be assigned to you and your battle navigator. You give your damage reports in this format: "ship_name: x% damage, y% bilge" either in /o (officer chat) or in ventrilo or teamspeak. You must also inform the LA whether your ship has sank or has gotten out of the blockade board safely. Make sure you mention the ship name. Just saying "we sank" or "we're out" doesn't help much unless they know who you are.

You must also regularly check your stock. It will be a very difficult situation if you're stuck in the middle of the blockade board without rum and/or shot. If either gets really low make sure you send a tell to your battle navigator to inform them and also to the LA. Make sure you remove any poe that goes in the hold and give them to the appropriate person by using the /pay command. You need to remove poe from the hold regularly because you don't want the poe to sink with the ship. The person to receive the poe will be assigned prior to the blockade and all XO's will be informed about it. You must make sure you have the rank of FO (fleet officer) in order to be able to remove poe from the hold. Also, if the ship is able to port you must make sure you divide the booty and again remove the poe from the ship's hold.

In some cases after you get out of the blockade safely you might have to apply the plank-and-catch method of getting jobbers off your ship and onto a new one. You will need to do this after you have shouted several times to your jobbers that they must board the new ship but somehow they are not getting off your ship. In this case, you inform the JC which is already located on the new ship that you are about to plank some people and that they must be caught. Then you begin to plank them one by one and the JC will job them again one by one as you plank them. In this way, the new ship is filled fast especially if it is urgent that it enters the board and no jobbers are accidentally lost because they were planked from your ship.

Now you know everything that there is to know about XOing in a blockade. So go out there and HAVE FUN!!!