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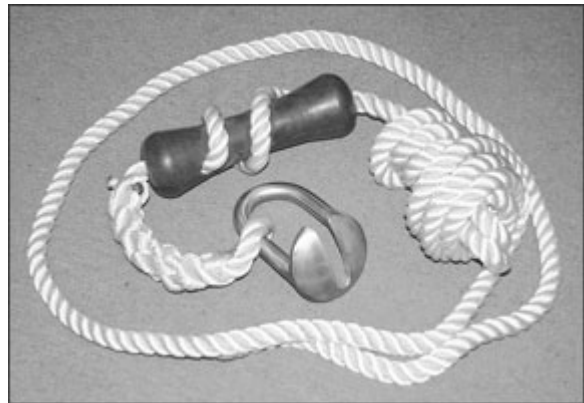
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Ultra Chain Grab and Snubber

Using an elastic nylon riding stopper (aka snubber) is always recommended when deploying an all-chain rode. Snubbers act as shock absorbers between rode and vessel, while at the same time transferring surge loading caused by wind and waves from the windlass to a deck cleat. No windlass is built to bear the load of a deployed anchor, particularly the bone-jarring snatches of an all-chain rode fetching up short.

Snubbers are typically constructed from three-strand nylon, which provides more stretch than double-braided line. They're installed between the vessel's mooring attachment point and chain forward of the bow roller, such that a loop of chain hangs down while the snubber takes the load. The preferred method of attaching a snubber to a chain is via a specialized hook, called a "devil's claw."

There are a number of variations of devil's claws available, including one we recently received from Quickline USA called the Ultra Chain Grab and Snubber. Available in six sizes, the one we inspected was the no. 8 unit, which consists of an Ultra Chain Grab Size 8 (for 1/4- or 5/16-inch chain), about 12½ feet of 1/2-inch nylon rope, and a no. 3 rubber snubber (for additional shock absorbing).



The Ultra Chain Grab and Snubber relieves stress on the anchor rode and windlass.

Constructed of welded, 316L SS, the Ultra Grab's shape allows it to be easily attached or removed from a taut chain rode, but it doesn't arbitrarily fall off by itself. The hanging loop of chain mentioned earlier is important in this regard, as its weight helps keep the unit in place as the anchor rode catenary flattens (due to increased loads from wind or current). Once you begin weighing anchor and the load is removed from the snubber, the chain grab automatically releases to prevent the unit from getting caught in the windlass upon retrieval (a nice feature, as many other units require you remove them from the chain using a boat hook).

You can also add line to the grabber using a bowline to create a mooring bridle, which gives you additional flexibility, such as the ability to angle your vessel into the wind or swells by adjusting the lengths of each leg (or running one section of the bridle to an amidships cleat).

The chain grab we received (for both 1/4-inch and 5/16-inch chain) was well constructed. With an advertised breaking load of 5,390 pounds, it develops the full strength of 1/4-inch chain (5,000 pounds breaking load). It's roughly 2,200 pounds shy of the 7,600-pound breaking load of 5/16-inch chain, however an Internet scan showed its rated breaking load meets or exceeds that of any other unit found.

Once the snubber is attached, you let out enough chain to position the grab or claw roughly half the distance between the anchor roller and the water. While the 12 feet of line provided with our test unit may be adequate in most cases, once the line is secured around a cleat, it is too short, in our opinion. Fifteen to 25 feet would provide additional length and load-absorbing stretch.

Prices for the Ultra Chain Grab and Snubber range from \$141 (size 6 for 3/16-inch chain) to

\$522 for the size 20 (for ¾-inch chain). The Ultra Chain Grab and rubber snubber can also be purchased separately and are available in six sizes. The chain grab and snubber system we received retails for \$178. The no. 8 Ultra Chain Grab can be purchased separately for \$86, which is competitive with units offered from other manufacturers. The size 3 rubber snubber sells for \$43, for a total of \$129. As half-inch, three-strand nylon rope runs around a buck a foot, you could actually save around \$35 by making up your own, although if the quality of your splicing is in doubt (and you don't want to use a bowline) you may want to spend the extra \$49 for an assembled system.

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