

West Wind

The Newsletter of the NZ Zephyr Owners Association

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The Wind is Back in West Wind

Welcome to the 1990's edition of West Wind. As there are a number of items to report to Zephyr Owners, it seemed worthwhile to revive the 1980s publication. For those new to the class, West Wind was first produced in October 1980 by John Vale in Hamilton. In his first editorial John said "the name *Zephyr*, as well as having a marked rhythmical cadence, is also appropriate for the Zephyr class because in addition to the more popular meaning of a light breeze, the dictionary tells us that *Zephyr* means light breeze personified".

John also went on to record that Zephyr No 1, now owned by Alan Retter, was delivered to Bill Moyes in August 1956. The intention was to found a fleet of about 20 boats,

Alan Retter, in Zephyr No 1, both still looking good. They featured inside the back cover of Sailing New Zealand in 1996.

with a life of about 10 years. Ultimately, Des Townson produced some 219 hulls, with later building programs adding more to the initial stock. Nearly forty years on the Zephyr remains an attractive sailing dinghy. The fleet has been generally well maintained, evidenced by the appearance of Zephyr No 1 in this issue.

1997 began with an enjoyable National Championship. Whilst the sailing conditions were a bit trying, the friendly and co-operative atmosphere at the contest and the pleasure the competitors derived from each other's company was perhaps an indication of why the Des Townson designed class has survived and is still strong after 39 years.

The Championship Forum, chaired by National Coordinator, Alex Aitken, raised a number of items that concern Zephyr sailors, and these are reported on in this issue. Alex (No 147, Zero) is bringing a welcome dose of order and determination to the affairs of the National Association.

1997 Zephyr Nationals

Pigeon Bay Boating Club, Jan 9-12.

by Dick Brown & Rob Ebert

Andrew Brown, former Starling skipper and recent Zephyr convert won this year's championship, but it was Cyclone Drena that had the last word, providing vexing conditions for a fleet of twenty five skippers.

P Class skippers in the Tauranga and Tanner Cups enjoyed steady easterly breezes for their Lyttelton harbour regatta earlier in the week, conditions which returned for the Flying Fifteen champs the following week. In between, Zephyr skippers had to contend with winds which varied in direction and strength across the course, placing a premium on physical and mental agility and a robust sense of humour! Andrew Brown emerged the winner, from class veterans Don Le Page and Richard Ineson.

Held in conjunction with the Phoenix Class Nationals, the contest got underway on Thursday the 9th with a morning Invitation Race sailed in a moderate, shifty sea breeze. It featured a great duel between Don Le Page and Andrew Brown, with Brown taking the gun. The 25 contestants then lined up for Race 1 in similar conditions with Brown sailing *Ebbtide Express* home ahead of Don Le Page in *Front Runner*, and Richard Ineson in *Wave Dancer*. Race 2 was back to back and saw Brown record his third win for the day with Ineson second and Le Page third.

Race 3 on Friday morning started in SW breeze which changed to NE sea breeze half way through the race. Changing fortunes were a feature of the race which was won by top NZ Moth sailor, Warren Thomas, with Le Page second and 1989 National Title-holder, Bill Beere, third.

Race 4 in the afternoon saw the breeze back to the SW. A wind shift after the Phoenix start converted the first leg to a reach and made an on the wind start impossible. A series of general recalls saw the one minute rule invoked. Brown, looking to redeem a fifth from the morning race, started prematurely, forcing him to sail around the start boat and set out after the fleet. Working the shifts intelligently, he was able to recover to take the gun from Le Page, with Murray Hay sailing *Silver Shadow*, third.

On day three light breezes and heavy rain heralded Drena's increasing influence. Fickle fifth race conditions saw Brown lead home Bill Beere and Richard Ineson before the breeze died completely. Two scheduled races were postponed, and a late afternoon race was saved from abandonment by a fresh SW that brought Don Le Page in ahead of Andrew Brown with Danny Jameson, in his first major Zephyr contest, third.

Freshening breezes saw skippers securing their boats against a wild night. Despite these precautions, Andrew Brown's boat suffered deck damage when it was picked up in a gust and dropped upside down on top of an aluminium launch. Some of the competitors who were staying in the camping ground had an

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interesting night!

Sunday morning saw the contest still three races short of the scheduled nine. The wind was 25 knots gusting to 30 but Race Officer Yvonne Pender, herself a Zephyr sailor, said "You've been moaning about the lack of wind all week so get out there." Andrew Brown relished the fresh conditions, despite liberal application of Duct Tape to *Ebbtide's* deck. He won by almost three minutes from Don Le Page with Richard Ineson third. Race 8 was marked by even gustier, shifty conditions. Big shifts in the gusts made for violent backwinding, so that few escaped a capsizing or a swamping. The conditions suited Don Le Page, who recorded another win over Andrew Brown who capsized at the top mark. Murray Hay and Richard Ineson crossed the line together to dead-heat for third.

The weather was still deteriorating so Race 9 was abandoned, with contestants retreating to the hospitality of the Pigeon Bay Yacht Club for the Prize Giving.

This year saw some new faces in the class. Sally Maynard, was our youngest competitor and left for Timaru immediately after prize-giving to compete in the Starling Nationals. Sally joined Belinda Andrews, Sarah Duffell and Sandra Hammond for the Women's Trophy. The B Division continued to be keenly contested and the "Thunderbirds" contested a daily trophy, awarded with suitable ceremony in the lounge of the Pigeon Bay Yacht Club.

Defending champion, class stalwart, and benchmark Russell Durrant was a notable absentee this year, with Rob Ebert (Hamilton) being the only North Island representative. Part of the problem may have been that InterIslander bookings were hard to come by this year, with both P Class, Starling and Flying Fifteen contests held around the same time.

For sailing purists, the conditions left a bit to be desired, but those who came for competitive recreational sailing and some good fun were not disappointed.

Results

Skipper	Points	Places
A Brown	6	1,1,5,1,1,2,1,2,
D Le Page	17.7	2,3,2,2,6,1,2,1,
R Ineson	47.8	3,2,4,8,3,DSQ,3,3,
W Beere	56.4	6,4,3,5,2,5,4,10
M Hay	70.8	8,8,6,3,4,6,8,3
R Ebert	85.7	4,6,8,7,10,8,5,9
D Jamieson	91.4	16,13,11,4,7,3,11,6
A Holland	92	5,5,7,9,8,154,10,8
W Thomas	95.7	12,12,1,6,13,10,7,DNF
G McKenzie	98	11,15,14,9,5,4,12,5
S Hammond	108	9,7,10,11,15,7,9,13
G Mantell	114	13,10,9,12,14,11,6,11
R Mackie	124	7,18,15,13,12,12,16,7
R Wenham	129	14,9,13,17,11,9,14,DNF
P Stokel	155	10,11,24,12,16,15,13,DNF
S Maynard	157	18,14,12,19,9,16,DNF,DNF
H Thomas	177	17,15,DNF,21,20,18,17,DNC
G Hammond	181	DNC,DNC,DNC,DNC,18,13,15,12
J Dodge	182	21,21,16,23,22,17,20,DNC
R Cameron	185	20,22,23,16,20,24,18,DNC
Belinda Andrews	187	24,17,22,25,21,19,DNC
S Duffell	191	DNC,DNC,17,14,17,20,DNC,DNC
Brent Andrews	191	22,19,19,20,19,23,DNF,DNC
A Aitken	192	19,DNF,17,15,23,22,DNF,DNC
G Hutt	195	23,23,21,22,24,19,21,DNC
N Richardson	205	15,20,20,DNC,DNC,DNC,DNC,DNC

Options for the 1998 National Championship

One of the suggestions put forward for the 1998 National Championship was to combine it with the Starling Championship, primarily as a means of promoting the Zephyr class. Both are Townson designs, with the Starling being intended as the transition from a P class to the Zephyr. Many current Starling skippers are unaware of the origins and attractions of the Zephyr.

As a junior class, the venue for the Starling contest is allocated by Yachting New Zealand. A zoning system operates so that families involved in P class and Starling contests are in the same area of the country. The zone for 1998 is likely to be the lower North Island, from Taupo to Wellington, including New Plymouth and Hawkes Bay. The host club is selected from those that indicate an interest to YNZ, and will be decided at the YNZ National Council Meeting on 22nd March 1997. The traditional time for Starling Contests is early to mid January. Practically speaking, we would have to approach the club chosen by YNZ to have them run our contest in association with the Starling event.

One other option is the Waikato-Thames Centreboard Regatta in Whitianga at Waitangi weekend (early February). Mercury Bay has a good reputation as a sailing venue, but it is a bit remote.

The problem we have is that the current rotation of national championships between Christchurch and French Bay places the organising demands on the same group of people every two years. One solution to this is to attempt to broaden participation in the class, thus creating more potential venues, as was possible when Zephrys sailed at Tamaki, Waiuku and other clubs.

Another suggestion is a biennial event, but there is a risk that we could lose a bit of momentum without the focus of an annual championship.

If anyone has any other bright ideas, please let us know.

Championship Forum

Providing an opportunity for Zephyr skippers to voice their concerns is a regular feature of National Championships, so on the Thursday evening (9/1/97), Alex Aitken convened a meeting of about 20 people interested in sharing their views. A discussion paper previously circulated by Alex kick started the proceedings.

Perceptions of the Zephyr Class

There were a number of comments about the way the class is perceived. Unfortunately, it is viewed as something of an "old man's class, something that was sailed after being too old to sail a Laser". However, a recent "Cheap Thrills" article in Ned's Locker in Seaspray rated the Zephyr favourably for very affordable fun. The Zephyr was viewed as cheap, accessible and affordable, but something of a well kept secret in terms of performance and sociable sailing. The class provides cheap access to yachting as a first time, "learn to sail" purchase.

Exposing other sailors to the Zephyr was seen as a means of arousing interest in the class, especially those in junior classes such as Starlings, who may be unaware of the Zephyr's existence. The possibility of holding a national contest in association or conjunction with the Starlings was mooted as a way of raising awareness. Attempts need to be made to establish the class in other centres, so that further competitive fleets develop.

Andrew Brown, eventual contest winner, commented that he selected the Zephyr class to further his yachting career as it offered a good standard of competition at an affordable entrance price. He felt that the Zephyr was a realistic alternative for a teenage skipper lacking the body weight for the Laser class.

Zephyr Hulls

The original Zephyrs are all in reasonably good condition, having lasted considerably more than their intended 10 years. Some skippers reported separation of the planking, requiring replacement, possibly caused by glue failure. Later boats, with Recorsinol based glues, did not seem to be as affected.

Modern cedar/glass hulls were built of a mould derived from measuring a number of original hulls. They were perceived as being slightly different from the original hulls, with possible advantages reaching in marginal planing conditions. It is difficult to evaluate this realistically, however, as they are generally sailed by very competent skippers, and are well set up and sailed. The original hulls were built off at least two moulds by Des Townson, and also exhibit some variation in shape.

Cedar hull construction has been technically successful, but the demand for new boats had been disappointing. Noel May, builder and class Patron, has now retired from boat building and closed his premises. The construction of new boats is thus in abeyance at present. The class rules require that hulls must be built by an approved builder, off an approved mould.

The cost of new hulls, at \$2500-3000 excluding deck was seen to be inevitable, given the method of construction, but in line with the general cost of a new dinghy these days.

Masts

The high cost of the alloy masts was alluded to, being seemingly more expensive than comparable Starling and Phoenix sections. Part of the cost difference is in the tapering of the section. Changing to a cheaper section would require some investigation, as the current section is specified in the current class rules, and is commonly used in dinghy classes.

Sails

Some comment was made on the standard of finish and variation in sails supplied by Boyd & McMaster. Variation in the position of batten pockets was apparent in rigged boats, and skippers reported having to alter batten length when moving to a new sail. Boyd & McMaster's long association with the Zephyr class was a valued one, so it was suggested that a review of sail construction should be initiated with them. A particular issue is the excessive width of batten pockets, now that most people are using fibreglass battens. Again, the standard nature of the sails meant that alteration could require a rule change.

Class Promotion

Skippers currently in Starlings are a possible source of future Zephyr sailors, particularly female skippers who are traditionally less attracted to Lasers and other competitive classes. Having the Zephyr included in the Masters games is another potential avenue.

National Contest

Alternatives to the current rotation of National Contests between Christchurch and French Bay were canvassed. The basic problem is that these are now the only two centres with active fleets and an interest in organising the event, but it does create a burden for the same group of people. This year's contest was held with the Phoenix class, with about fifteen boats, easing the problems of contest organisation.

National Class Administration

Alex Aitken outlined the problems of reviving and administering the Zephyr class nationally. His assessment of issues that need to be dealt with required a national association of about 70-80 members at \$15.00 each. Current membership stands at about 40, and a target of 70 was felt to be pretty ambitious. Alex explored the options of financing the national association, favouring a national membership, with refunds to the local associations. Opinion from the floor favoured local associations paying a levy to the national association, in keeping with the principle of the YNZ levy on affiliated yacht clubs.

Elite Yachting v Recreational Sailing

The forum reflected upon the current trend to focus on elite performance in yachting (and all sports). The impact of this approach on long term participation in recreational sailing is unknown, but internationally all sports are experiencing reduced participation. The sailor of the future may be one who sailed a P Class for a couple of seasons and now just watches the America's Cup on TV! Nowadays yachting needs elite performers to provide the media profile that success in international competition brings, but it also needs grass roots support to fill the junior classes with the talented sailors of the future.

From the pen of Alex Aitken *National Coordinator*

From a recent conversation with Dennis Craig, it seems the Auckland Zephyr fleet has had a subdued holiday period. The weather has proved a little dodgy, but Dennis seems sure that Zephyr owners will soon be hoisting their sails and blowing the cobwebs away.

The Auckland Championships will be held at the Tamaki Yacht Club in conjunction with the Mistral class, with about twelve Zephyrs expected. The annual combined yacht club regatta on the Manukau is also likely to attract a number of Zephyrs.

The class mould is in the process of being relocated, and there is interest in the remaining hull taken off the mould, so with any luck, next season may see a new Zephyr on the water.

There has been some movement in the Zephyr market. Rhys Burton has sold *Ghost* No.127 and is looking around for a replacement boat. Former Championship winner, *ET*, No 254 has gone south to John Wear. John has forsaken Auckland, his Elliot 1050 (*Pretty Woman*), and returned to his Christchurch roots.

In the South, all the Canterbury Clubs are back in action, with Zephyrs featuring on the Estuary and Waimak River. Local events in the offing are the South City-Christchurch Yacht Club Sumner Bay Regatta (Feb 6) and the Canterbury Interclub Match Racing (Feb 23). This latter event features the Zephyr and is a feature event in the local dinghy racing calendar.

In conclusion, thanks to Rob Ebert for compiling and publishing West Wind and best wishes to all Zephyr sailors for the rest of the season.

Noel May Retires

Noel May, Zephyr class Patron, and builder of the cedar/glass hulls retired from boat building late last year. Townson boats were a feature of his career, as he built Des's designs for himself and others. Noel thought hard about retirement. He spent the last three years before retiring designing and building *Summer Wine*, a 10m launch that he says "looks like a Townson".

Noel has requested that the Zephyr mould he created for the cedar/glass boats be moved from his former workshop. Rhys Burton, from the Auckland Zephyr Owners Association is in the process of locating another interested builder, with a view to relocating the mould.

By Association...

The NZZOA has a number of issues on the boil at the moment, as you may have gathered from the contents of the newsletter.

Class Participation: The Zephyr is something of a well kept secret at the moment, and it may be that a new generation of sailors needs to be acquainted with the class. We offer a high standard of competitive sailing with a recreational focus. Many Zephyr sailors are active in other classes, and/or have commitments to work and family which restrict time on the water. Zephyrs also compete with other classes for the available pool of sailors emerging from the junior ranks. Talented sailors are generally encouraged into Olympic classes by "elite athlete" focus of YNZ. Those that remain disperse to a range of classes, or leave the sport for a while.

Class Rules: Brett White put a lot of work into drafting the Class Rules issued in 1990. We are just about out of copies of these, and there has been one amendment since 1990. The rules, plus Brett's guide to them are in the process of revision and will be issued some time this year.

Measuring: There are a small number of measurement issues in the class that need to be addressed. The measurement form is included in the Class Rules 1990 document, and needs minor revision.

National Register: During the 1980s, a lot of effort went into creating a Class Register and uniquely identifying each boat with a carved in number. The register is now computer based (MS Access), but keeping up with change of ownership in the fleet is a constant challenge. Fortunately, Zephyr sailors are notorious for not selling their boats, even if they have not been sailed for a number of years!

Newsletter: Class newsletters are a good idea, but a bit of a mission for those involved in production. No promises are being made about the regular production of the new West Wind. However, the availability of simple PC based desktop publishing programs does mean that information to members can be presented attractively when there is anything to report.

Class Finances: A perennial problem, especially for a National Class Association, which often competes with local class associations and YNZ for subs. The issues outlined here and elsewhere in the newsletter don't always benefit the local club sailor, but they are among the NZZOA's activities (often in fits and starts, according to the available enthusiasm) to maintain the health of the class. Keep those subs rolling in, so that we can improve the services offered to members.

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