

**NEW SURFCAT:** Slushing along in fine style is Greg West in one of Durban's sporty new catamarans designed for fun in the surf. These craft can give the thrill of lifetime in the breakers—and there are outstanding action colour shots in Life International, Vol. 48, No. 4, pages 37-39 of the original Hobie cat. The local version is described below by Paul Green.

## SURF SAILING

A NEW concept in sailing has hit Durban in the form of the astonishing Surfcat. As the name implies, it is a catamaran designed for sailing on and off the beach and for surfing the waves in the same way as a surfboard.

The cat is the brainchild of Australian Darryl Holmes and local surfboard builder 21-year-old Greg West. Darryl was amazed at the lack of multihull dinghies in this country when he arrived in January, 1969, as they are very popular in Australia. Greg, who started building surfboards two years ago, has constantly endeavoured to keep pace with ever-changing trends in Hawaii, California and Australia. He has also been sailing for the past ten years, progressing from Cadets to One Designs and Thirty Square Metres. Darryl has been connected with fibreglass moulding for ten years in Australia and now in Durban.

Together, they sought information and finally settled on a modified design on these craft.

The original pattern for the mould was shaped from a 15 ft. "chunk" of polyurethane foam which they blew themselves. The hulls are asymmetrically designed which means the outside face is flat and the inside curved. This eliminates the need for a centreboard while giving a remarkable performance to weather.

Two experimental prototypes have been built and modified until perfect performance on all points of sailing have been achieved.

Using a modified 505 mainsail the boat reaches speeds in excess of 20 m.p.h. and is almost impossible to capsize. The sensation is exhilarating when sailing with the weather hull clear of the water. The whole boat is extremely light, weighing about 180 lb., and can be dismantled and assembled for car-topping in just over 15 minutes.

There is a nylon trampoline deck which is extremely comfortable and can carry up to six people. The lack of

centreboards gives it a very shallow draught of 8 in. which means it can sail almost anywhere.

Greg and Darryl have sailed off the beaches in Durban, through surf of up to six feet and are amazed at how the boat lifts over the incoming breakers without losing its speed. Surfing in on the waves is apparently something which has to be experienced to be appreciated. The Surfcat is extremely manoeuvrable and can carve tracks in the wave in much the same way as a surfboard.

The Surfcat is equally at home on inland waters and in fact most of the experimenting was done on Durban Bay where the winds of 30 m.p.h. are ideally suited to the boat. Speed bursts with a Flying Dutchman and a 505 proved the cat's superiority in varying conditions.

The Surfcat is 14 ft. long and has a beam of 7 ft. 6 in. The sail area is just on 100 sq. ft. They are available in a wide range of colours and can be bought in kit form for R99 per hull or R495 for the complete boat including sails and rudder assembly. These prices include sales tax. Having only a mainsail, she is extremely simple to rig and sail.

This is certainly ideal for the family man who wants lots of fun and excitement. Its stability, simplicity, speed and low cost make it very attractive to prospective boat buyers which could well develop a new and exciting class.

## Dabchicks Surge Ahead

FOR some time now Natal has lagged behind the Cape in the promotion of junior sailing. The only efforts to date have been the Point Yacht Club's Cadet scheme and two school sailing clubs.

Recently the Point Yacht Club decided to hold a Natal Inter-Schools Regatta similar to that held in the Cape, and it was sailed at Lake Midmar on Sunday March 15. The event was wholly sponsored by the Point Yacht Club, and the club's Commodore, Ken McKenzie, donated a handsome floating trophy, in 22 carat gold-plate, which was awarded to the winning school team.

This first inter-schools regatta was a great success, with 22 Natal schools entered. Three races were sailed, with three to count. The 66 boats on the start line provided a spectacular sight for the large crowd of spectators. Racing was extremely keen and the Michaelhouse first team did

extremely well to win the event overall. Second overall was Pietermaritzburg College first team. This was a highly commendable effort, as College have only recently formed a sailing club. No less an achievement was the Ladysmith High School's third position.

Individual results of the three races were as follows:

**First Race:** 1. C. Hancock (Maritzburg College); 2. R. Thorpe (Michaelhouse); 3. D. Herridge (Maritzburg College); 4. C. Alexander (Hilton).

**Second Race:** 1. B. Taylor (Ladysmith); 2. J. Thorpe (Michaelhouse); 3. R. Thorpe (Michaelhouse); 4. C. Alexander (Hilton).

**Third Race:** 1. C. Hancock (Maritzburg College); 2. D. Herridge (Maritzburg College); 3. C. Alexander (Hilton); 4. K. Smith (Durban High School).

Christopher Hancock, 14, of Maritzburg College, who won two out of the three races, has been sailing for as long as he can remember. He started crewing with his father in Sprogs, and is showing tremendous promise.

Robin Thorpe, 16, Michaelhouse, and Jeremy Thorpe, 15, have both been sailing for about three years. Robin was second in the Natal Dabchick Championships last year. Robin is going into Sprogs.

David Herridge, 16, Maritzburg College, started sailing nine years ago. He won the Natal Championships and was second in the Nationals at Zeekoevlei last year. He and his elder brother are going into 505s.

Campbell Alexander, 16, Hilton, started sailing four years ago. He was fourth in the Natal Sprog Championships and fourth in the Natal Enterprise Championships. He has done some keel boat sailing with his father including a trip to Lourenço Marques in an R.C.O.D. Campbell will be sailing Sprogs regularly now.

Keith Smith, 14, Durban High School, started sailing two years ago. Now sails a Cadet very successfully every week at the Point Yacht Club.

Bruce Taylor, 14, Ladysmith, was sixth in the nationals at Zeekoevlei. The only male member of his team in this regatta which did extremely well.

Leslie Nathanson, 15, is of Maritzburg College, although

## Natal Inter-Schools

1. The Michaelhouse First Team, winners of the trophy. Back row, left to right: C. Chance, R. Thorpe, D. Durham. Front: S. Goddard, R. Melouney, A. Brown.

2. Pietermaritzburg College First Team. Left to right: N. van Heeswyk, L. Nathanson, J. Herridge, D. Herridge, C. Hancock.

3. Ladysmith Team, left to right: C. Roderick, S. Clarence, C. Doring, G. Clarence, B. Taylor, J. Clarence.

4. John Drennan at the prize-giving with Robin Standing.

5. Campbell Alexander with his crew Nicholas Wood.

6. The winning skipper Christopher Hancock with his crew G. Adie.

Photos: Paul Green

not placed, was first in the Natal Sprog Championships. He will be going into Fireballs. There are many others who were not placed in this regatta but who are also promising yachtsmen.

The organisation on the bridge was extremely good and handled entirely by members of the Michaelhouse Sailing Club. John Drennan, Robin Standing and Gee Bompas did most of the groundwork.

The large turnout indicates how much interest there is in sailing among school children, and emphasises the need for more organisation at school level.

Most of the children sailing in Natal at present come from sailing families. There must, however, be many other children who would be keen on sailing, but are not offered the facilities at their schools. At present there are only four schools in Natal (one of which is a girls' school) which have recognised sailing clubs. Sailing is a great character-building sport and it is time that other schools, many of which have active yachtsmen, followed their example.

This competition will obviously become the major event on the Natal Schools yachting calendar.

Final team results were as follows: 1. Michaelhouse (1st) (90 points), R. Thorpe/R. Melouney, D. Durham/A. Brown, C. Chance/S. Goddard; 2. Maritzburg College (1st) (102½ points), D. Herridge/J. Herridge, L. Nathanson/N. van Heeswyk, C. Hancock/G. Adie; 3. Ladysmith (113½ points), B. Taylor/J. Clarence, C. Roderick/S. Clarence, G. Clarence/C. Doring; 4. Hilton (3rd); 5. Highbury (1st); 6. Durban High School (1st).

Paul Green.

## F.D.'s at Chelmsford

THIS event was resailed at Chelmsford Dam on March 14 and 15. First originally scheduled for October, it was postponed due to lack of support. Entries were slightly better second time round, with an entry of ten boats.

Four races were held in variable wind conditions and John Sully and Alec Hardie won the regatta. It was hoped that the Hudson Brothers would give Sully a good race, but unfortunately they were not able to settle into the conditions.

Results were as follows: 1. J. Sully (first, first, second and fourth); 2. J. Tainton, A. Tucker; 4. D. Hudson.

## Spearheads Keen

THE Natal Spearhead Championships were held at Chelmsford at the same time as the Flying Dutchman Championships. There were 21 starters with most of the boats travelling from the Transvaal. Racing was extremely keen and Colin Gerrans did well to come out overall winner.

Results as follows: 1. C. Gerrans, Pretoria; 2. M. Goldswain, East London; 3. S. Smith, Pretoria; 4. D. Wishart, Durban.

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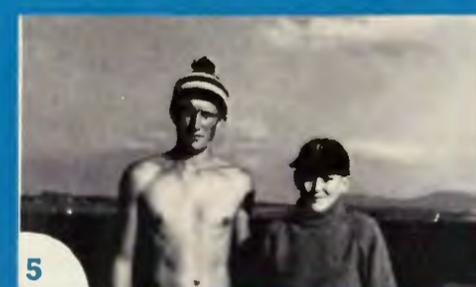
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