

505 & Flying Dutchman Worlds

by Andrew Heathcote

The MSC Worlds 2000 got off to a windy start on 13 November when a 50-knot westerly buster during race one of the pre-worlds regatta, wreaked havoc with the fleets of 22 Flying Dutchmen and 61 505s.

The FDs, sailing on the inshore course came off the better of the two fleets with no damage more serious than a few broken masts. In the 505 fleet, however, the rate of attrition was far higher. Three boats were lost, two of

them washing up on beaches on the north coast a few days later. Sadly these boats were retrieved in far more than one piece and will never sail again. Racing on the 505 course started with the wind up at around the 30-knot mark and building rapidly. Most of the fleet made it to the first mark without incident though some decided wisely during the course of this leg to sail straight past the mark and head for home. For the rest it was a wild ride downwind under spinnaker with several swim-

mers along the way, especially around the gybe mark.

Most agree that the wind was well over 40 knots by the time the second beat started and for those who were still in the race at this stage things were getting hairy. Few spinnakers were seen on the run to the leeward mark and those that were, were not seen for very long. By the last beat the fleet was simply surviving. Of the 50-odd starters only 20 finished the race and only one made it back to the beach under full rig. In all 17 masts were broken, mainly on the water, although one or two did come to a sorry end in the surf off Vetchie's Pier. The trouble began with the course being as far as it was from the safety of the launching beach and also the ferocity of the wind and waves.

On the FD course things were much the same although being inshore of the 505s they suffered less from the waves than from the wind. With the advantage of having roller-furling genoas, most of the fleet took the cautious option and rolled their headsails before heading for home. Only two boats finished the course but most made it home in one piece.

Day two of the pre-worlds brought more westerly. It was definitely too much to sail in and so all the sailors enjoyed a day of rest and recuperation, not to mention boat maintenance and mast building. Day three and still more westerly. With the breeze at around the 20-knot mark the race officers on both courses called the fleets out onto the water and laid their courses. The breeze, however, continued to build and once it got towards the 25-knot mark, the race officers, cautious after the first day catastrophe abandoned their races and sent their fleets home.

At the opening ceremony for the Worlds, which doubled up as the prize giving for the pre-Worlds, the winners of the only race in the pre-Worlds regatta that was not a regatta, received prizes. Since only one race was sailed only first prizes were awarded. For the record the results were:

505

1	Bruce Edwards	USA
2	Mike Holt	GBR
3	Daniel Thompson	USA
4	Howard Hamlin	USA
5	Phillippe Boite	FRA
6	Jan Saugmann	DEN
7	Barney Harris	USA
8	Andrew Heathcote	RSA
9	Ian Pinnell	GBR
10	Joergen Schonherr	GER

Flying Dutchman

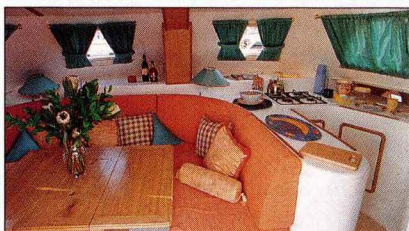
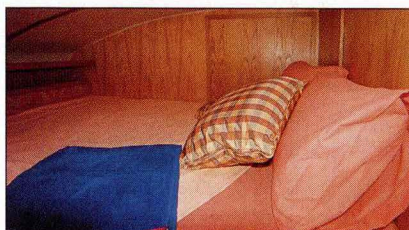
1	John Best	GBR
2	Ian McCrossin	AUS

The opening ceremony included a show which the foreign competitors certainly enjoyed. The navy band played early on in the evening and were followed by a local choir, gumboot dancers and more music.

With the balance of measurement and registration completed the following day everything was set for the first race which got underway in a building north-easterly breeze on Friday 17 November. Conditions were absolutely perfect for racing with the breeze building throughout the day, bringing with it some biggish waves and perfect surfing conditions for the downwind legs. Warm water, sunshine and plenty of breeze - just what the doctor ordered. Everyone was happy.

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Ian Barker, a medallist in Sydney, with Daniel Cripps as crew for this event, never had the speed to finish on the podium, finishing fourth overall.

Pic by Richard Crockett

Day two and the dreaded westerly kicked in again. This time it was to stay for an unprecedented four days. The race officers made daily trips out onto the ocean in the hope that they would find conditions to be sailable but a combination of strong winds and huge seas kept the fleets on the shore for the duration. This unfortunate weather pattern presented the event organizers with the very real possibility of not being able to get in the minimum number of races required for the event to constitute a championship. It was agreed by the race man-

agement and the class representatives that the sailing instructions be amended to allow for two races a day while the option of racing both fleets on one course was also discussed and tentatively approved should the conditions make this necessary.

Everyone breathed a very big sigh of relief when Wednesday 22 November dawned with bright blue skies and a light breeze. Both fleets were out on the water on time and off to their separate courses where they both enjoyed two races in a dying southerly breeze which shifted

to the left throughout the day. At the end of the day though, the racing had been good and the courses well.

Thursday was even brighter with a building easterly which had set in early. Things again got under way on time and on separate courses. With the breeze peaking at around 18 knots and the waves building up nicely, both fleets had two races in absolutely perfect conditions. At the end of the day there were very few competitors who did not have ear-to-ear smiles. This was exactly what everyone had come to Durban for.

With five races sailed, the pressure on the race management team had eased considerably. With one race scheduled for the final day, neither class knew who the winners were going to be. In the FDs, Ian McCrossin and James Cooke held a slender one point lead over Hans-Peter Schwarz and Roland Kirst with the third-placed boat of John Best and James Cole only a further four points back. In the 505 fleet four-time world champion Krister Bergstrom, sailing with Thomas Moss, held a 5.7 point lead over the 1999 world championship-winning crew Mike Martin, who had crewing for him Steve Bourdow. 1999 world championship helm Howard Hamlin, this time with Peter Alarie, were also in the picture, another eight points behind.

So with the stage set for a thrilling final. All that was left was for the weather to play its part. As things would have it, the westerly again made its presence felt at 30-plus knots as a result of which the regatta came to an early end without the boats even leaving the beach. The results stayed as they were and the competitors were able to get their boats packed.

The prize giving was a grand affair, perhaps too grand for a sailing regatta. But nonetheless it was enjoyed by all. Once the awards ceremo-

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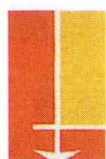
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Hans-Peter Schwarz and Roland Kirst of Germany missed out on the world champions' title in the FD class by a single point.
Pic by Richard Crockett

ny had been completed the stage was turned over to the band Afritude, who played long into the night.

It was a well-organized and for the most part, well-run regatta. The weather made life extremely difficult for the race management. That the westerly, and on one day the north-easter, blew so hard for so many days during a two week period is hard to believe. The event was well attended with only five of the 21 Flying Dutchman entered being from South Africa while in the 505 fleet only 15 of the 61 entries were South African. There were several past world, European and North American champions, and the Sydney 2000 49er silver medalist in the 505 fleet, while the FDs also had their fair share of past champions, although the defending champion did not travel out to defend his crown.

In the 505 fleet the South African sailors battled to stay with the top foreigners who set a cracking pace. Although the local fleet is fairly small and for the most part aged, there are a number of boats which are up to date enough to be competitive. Sailed well, they would easily be able to get onto the pace. There is also nothing lacking in terms of the ability of any of the sailors involved; they simply hadn't spent enough time on the water, and it is no coincidence that the top two South African finishers in this event, in 31st and 33rd position, had spent a considerable amount of time on the water in the weeks preceding the regatta, sailing every day that the weather permitted.

Next year's Worlds will be sailed in Cascais, in Portugal. ⚓

Results

Flying Dutchman - 21 boats

1	Ian McCrossin/James Cooke	AUS
2	Hans-Peter Schwarz/Roland Kirst	GER
3	John Best/James Cole	GER
4	Bas Van Der Pol/Marc Van Der Pol	NED
5	Harold Wijgers/Niels Kamphuis	NED
7	Nigel Trevarthen/Gavin Breckle	RSA
9	Dirk & Jens Von der Fecht	RSA

505 - 61 boats

1	Krister Bergstrom/Thomas Moss	SWE
2	Mike Martin/Steve Bourdow	USA
3	Howard Hamlin/Peter Alarie	USA
4	Ian Barker/Daniel Cripps	GBR
5	Ian Pinnell/Nick Powell	GBR
31	Derick Warne/Mark Schwegman	RSA
33	Andrew Heathcote/S Pammenter	RSA
35	Rob Hancock/Alan Franklin	RSA
36	Rob Willcox/Ditmar Herrmann	RSA
37	Nigel Milln/Anton Ellens	RSA

Interview

Les Nathanson

By Roy Dunster

Les Nathanson was one of the leading lights in the Fireball and 505 classes when he left South Africa for Australia in 1983. He was in Durban for the 505 World championships recently, and SAILING caught up with him.

SAILING: What do you do in Australia and where do you live?

LN: I'm a surgeon, based in Brisbane.

SAILING: What have you been sailing since you left RSA?

LN: I started sailing 505s again in the late '80s when the fleet became strong in Brisbane, and only race them now. We have a fleet of about 18 boats with about eight sailing regularly –

there are no other South Africans there. I went to the "5" Worlds in Townsville (Australia) in '96, Hyannis in '98 and now this one.

SAILING: What does a 505 cost in Aus, relative to the average professional's salary?

LN: In Australian dollars, a second hand boat is around \$9000 and a new one around \$18,000. I guess a normal professional salary is about \$80 000 - \$90 000.

SAILING: What boats sail at your club, and describe a typical weekend?

LN: I belong to the Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron which sails in Waterloo Bay. We have 420s, Sabots (a junior class), Lightweight Sharpies, Etchells, 14 Foot Skiffs, 29ers, Lasers and Europes. On a typical weekend, we get 30

420s (one is the World Champ), 30 Sabots, eight 14-Footers, eight 505s, six Sharpies, six Europes and about 12 Lasers. We can sail all year and the breeze is generally light to moderate (a bit different to here!), and the water is sheltered with not much tide.

SAILING: How big is the club, and is it growing?

LN: We have around 3000 - 4000 members in skiboats, keelers and dinghies, and we have a marina. I guess the numbers are growing slowly.

SAILING: What's changed the most since last you were in South Africa?

LN: Firstly, the roads here are fantastic. I was last here about five years ago and it seemed more tense/aggro then – it's hard for me to judge, though, and my crew did get mugged on the first night here.

SAILING: ...and the sailing?

LN: I've met a lot of people that I knew before, but don't see a new generation coming through.

SAILING: How does your club attract new people into the sport?

LN: We have a training school every week on a Saturday morning sponsored by a bank. The school teaches anyone who wants to sail and the club has boats to make that possible. For juniors, we employ people to teach them. All the schools in the area have various types of boats (owned by the schools) and there is a statewide team racing competition which runs through the year. The State champion goes through to the nationals and the overall winner competes for Australia in the Inter-Dominion championship against New Zealand. For the Training School, the club has an employed person who gets paid by the hour, and we use young accredited youth sailors (who are also paid by the hour).

SAILING: What are your perceptions of this regatta?

LN: The facilities on the beach are very good although launching is a problem, and the club needs to solve that. The good sailors are probably okay, but it's very hard for guys who are relatively inexperienced at sailing offshore. There will probably be a bad accident sometime. Obviously, the conditions at sea were also very difficult.

For the regatta itself, the rescue boats were an issue – they need to be manned by people actually experienced at sailing. The guys on the boats were very willing but Durban can be very wild and it needs more rescue boats with more experienced crews. The perception from overseas was that South Africa did not take the rescue situation seriously enough.

I thought the Race Officers did a good job and were just unfortunate on the first day. In terms of the organisation, the shipping was awesome and it only cost about Aus \$400 to get the boat here – that was a major help.

SAILING: Would you sail another regatta at this venue at this time of the year?

LN: Yes, because I know these were freakish conditions. What is puzzling, though, is why have a regatta like this at a time which clashed with school and university exams. The regatta was good – I saw some interesting boats and had some good sailing.

SAILING: One of my perceptions of the 505 fleet is that it is becoming quite "grey" – is that a concern?

LN: That's at this regatta – the young guys are writing exams. However, money is an issue and it takes a lot of experience to know how to pull the strings. Maybe there are fewer younger people in sailing and many of the good ones that do sail at top level are doing Olympic campaigns. I don't feel that the age of the sailors at this event is a concern. ↓

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