

NSW 16FT SKIFF ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF CLUB COMMODORES MEETING HELD 12/5/07
AT MANLY 16FT SKIFF SAILING CLUB

Meeting opened at 1.40pm.

Chairman: Lloyd Mulholland

APOLOGIES: Dave Mitchell (Drummoyne)

PRESENT: Lloyd Mulholland, Michael McMahon, Craig Corke, Troy Dobinson, Craig Nicholls, Rob Willetts, Joe Walsh, Chris Mulholland, Steve Ward, Riv Robson, Mark Graham, Alexandra Deakin and Alyce Grosseibl.

CLUBS REPRESENTED: Belmont, Manly, St George, Drummoyne, Georges River, Illawarra and Middle Harbour.

Lloyd Mulholland thanked the Commodores for attending. This is the fifth year that this forum has been held and the consensus continues to be that it is still worthwhile on an annual basis as it provided a means for clubs to share information and ideas.

Lloyd then invited each Commodore provide a report on their own club and that any issues be discussed as they arise.

Joe Walsh (**St George**)

- Indicated that the average number of starters each week at St George was around 5 this season, although there were 8 boats registered and 11 or 12 actually stored in their boatshed;
- Expects about the same numbers next season, with at least one new young crew;
- There are still some good numbers in other classes – Moths (20), Skates (12), MGs (15), Flying Ants and Skyriders;
- There are at least 15/16 juniors learning to sail each Saturday – biggest challenge is how to retain them;
- There will be an increase in prizemoney next season for the 16ft skiff division;
- Joe is pushing for a decrease in prizemoney to other classes;
- There will definitely be an increase in prizemoney for the Botany Bay Championship;
- Club has an agreement with Doltone House to rebuild club – 3 storey building (top floor for Doltone House, middle floor for the Club and lower floor for a boatshed);
- Club has formed a link with 12 footers – they host at least one race for them in September.

Alexandra Deakin (**Middle Harbour**)

- Their fleet for this season was 18 registered boats with around 13/14 regular starters; she expected that the numbers would remain at least the same for next season;
- They have started a 13ft skiff fleet with 3 boats this season; they hope for 5 next season;
- They have at least 19 juniors sailing a combined fleet of Skyriders, MJs and Flying 11s;
- Some of their juniors competed very successfully in the recent CHS Regatta at Belmont;
- The Club had a new Club Champion this year for the first time in 7 years;
- The Club was excited at winning their first Australian 16ft Skiff title in just over 35 years (“Bob Jane T-Marts, Edgecliff”);
- The Club will be hosting the MJ Nationals in January 2008;

- The renewal of the lease on their Club premises was still a major issue for them – it has yet to be resolved;
- The Club is still trading well and making a profit; they would still like to carry out some renovations but will not be doing so until the lease issue is resolved; the old “Fresh Ketch” restaurant space may be used as a function centre.

Craig Nicholls (Manly)

- The Club’s fleet dropped a bit this season with 24 registered skiffs and 19/20 regular starters; there may be a couple of extra boats next season;
- There was a fleet of 10 13ft skiffs this season; expects a fleet of around 13 next season;
- A much closer bonding had been established between the 13 and 16 fleet this season; next season the 13s will sail every week with the 16s; at least one skipper from the 13s this season will be moving up to skipper a 16 next season (James Dorrton to “Fire Stopping”);
- He expects the Flying 11 fleet to increase from 15 to 20 next season, whilst the MJs should increase from around 16 to 22;
- The Club started a Learn to Sail programme this season and put through 47 kids aged between 5 and 14;
- The Sailing Manager regularly receives phone calls from older teenagers about learning to sail and also get into 16s, but the Club does not have any facility or the resources to be able to accommodate this demand;
- The Club will be hosting the Flying 11 Nationals in January 2008;
- They have finally renegotiated the Club lease with NSW Maritime Authority – 2½% on turnover up to \$4 million then 5% for amount over \$4 million; they also have to pay 2½% on any sponsorships received; this will increase their rent from around \$37,000 to \$100,000;
- The Board is now looking at a major renovation project for the club building;
- The Club’s sailing sponsorships totalled around \$100,000 this season through the efforts of Sailing Manager Brad Andrew;
- The Club is still trading profitably.

Riv Robson (Drummoyne)

- Indicated that their fleet had remained much the same this season with about 10 boats; expect to lose a couple next season, but also gain a couple; at least one new junior crew;
- Junior numbers are strong, with training sessions on Sunday mornings;
- TS16s now sail on Saturday afternoons with the 16ft skiffs;
- The 16ft skiffs are only paid start and finish money and this will remain the same next season;
- A DA for a 22 berth marina in front of the Club has been approved; uncertain as to completion date at this stage;
- The Club is to carry out further extensions on the western side, extending the building a further 7 metres; there will also be extensions carried out to the top floor dining area;
- Club is still running profitably.

Troy Dobinson (Belmont)

- Indicated that their fleet had remained about the same as last season; they had a fleet of around 25-26 starting each week; there could be a couple more next season;
- Encouraging interest has been received from the Gosford area; it is possible that there could be a fleet of 4/5 skiffs commencing to sail at GSC on Saturdays and Belmont on Sundays;
- Expects that the hosting of the Australian 16ft Skiff Championships by the Club in 2009/10 could boost their numbers again;

- Club is proposing to change the format of their Sprints – open entry on the Sunday; they hope to combine it with a Regatta event on the Saturday to make a weekend of it;
- Troy spoke on a notice of motion that they had just lodged with the Association in regard to the State Championships (they propose to incorporate the format of 4 heats over two weekends in November into the State rules);
- Their Pelican fleet is still struggling for numbers at around 10; some of their crews have moved to the Flying 11 fleet which is increasing;
- Their VJ fleet is almost gone; perhaps will only last another one or two seasons;
- Cherub fleet also seems to be winding down;
- The 29er fleet has increased after being introduced last season;
- The Club is trading well with another strong year;
- New “no smoking” changes in July could be a problem (ie. no smoking anywhere inside a premises); the impact will not be known until the rule is introduced;
- The concrete cancer problem with the section under the Club facing the Lake continues; they are still locked in litigation with the builder; it could cost upwards of \$1.5 million to rectify.

Robert Willetts (**Illawarra**)

- IYC had 7 skiffs registered this season, but only 6 regular starters; there is no clear indication that the situation will improve next season, even though they have several spare boats in the shed available for crews to sail;
- Believes their fleet will increase in 2008/09, maybe up to 12, with an influx of Juniors and the fact that the Club will host the Australian 16ft Skiff Championship that season;
- Their Flying Ant fleet continues to grow and they again achieved good results in this season’s National Championships;
- The 29er fleet started last season; some Flying Ant sailors moved across, but have expressed definite interest in the 16s for the future, maybe after the 29er Worlds due to be held in Sorrento (Melbourne) next season;
- The Club hosted the MG States over the Easter weekend;
- They have a strong Sky rider fleet (25/30 kids), but there is a high attrition rate; a number of kids are unfortunately moving off into other pursuits and activities;
- The Club itself has traded much better in the last 12 months, particularly since the previous long standing Secretary-Manager left; a new and younger Sec-Manager (Scott Hawkins) has recently been appointed;
- The Club is building an open deck on the western side of the Club to help minimise the impact of the new non-smoking rules;
- The remainder of the Club is to be reorganised and renovated over the next year or so;
- Seven out of ten Board members are now involved with the 16ft skiff division.

Steve Ward (**Georges River**)

- There were 10 registered skiffs this season with 8/9 regular starters;
- Expects at least 3 new boats next season, possibly up to 5; a number of the new crews are from 420’s;
- The Club has 40 Lasers, 10-12 Herons, 18 Sabots and an Open Youth Class consisting of a mixture of 420’s, Tasers, 29ers and Lasers;
- Cherub fleet also, but they are down to 3;
- Junior sailing takes place on Sunday morning;
- In the past, the 16ft skiffs regarded themselves as the elite; there have been attempts to forge a closer relationship between the Junior and 16ft Skiff Division; until this season they have not been very successful; this season has seen a number of positive moves to forge a much closer relationship;

- Over a number of years, many skiff sailors came from the MGs and Northbridge Seniors;
- The Club will be reverting to a short course racing format next season for the 16ft skiffs;
- Prizemoney is to be reviewed;
- The Club has not traded that well; Steve considers that new blood is needed to provide a fresh impetus.

There was no delegate or report from the **Port Hunter** club.

Mark Graham (13ft skiffs)

- The Australian Championships held at the same time as the 16s in Geelong were very successful; the interaction with the 16ft sailors was extremely beneficial;
- The Manly Club expects at least one new boat next season, with 2-3 new boats at MH; in addition, two boats are expected to go to Brisbane where the Queensland 16ft Skiff Association is keen to start a fleet; a number of enquiries were received from Victoria after the Nationals but nothing concrete has transpired to date;
- The NSW Association is currently investigating where hulls should be built – in Australia or overseas;
- Next Sunday, the Manly Club will host about 6 kids from the Vaucluse Sailing Club who are interested in the 13ft class;
- The 29er Worlds scheduled for Melbourne next season have proved a bit of problem in attempts to promote the 13ft class;
- Next season, the 13s will be holding their Australian Championships in Brisbane in conjunction with the 16s;
- The Association has been offered a stand at the Boat Show in July in conjunction with Yachting NSW and a 13ft skiff will be displayed;
- The 13ft Class will soon have their own website – www.13ftskiff.org.au
- Mark said that it was important for 16ft skiff fleets at all clubs to develop a synergy with their junior fleets;
- Steve Ward indicated that it was important to encourage kids in their mid to late teens while parents might still contribute funds to buying boats, etc..; once young people move into their 20's they are usually on their own and less able to afford it.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Carbon spars - the NSW Association set up a Carbon Spar sub-Committee in August 2006 to consider the pros and cons of adopting carbon spars. Troy Dobinson, a member of that Committee, indicated that their report was almost ready and provided an indication as to its content:-

- On an overall cost/benefit analysis the move to carbon spars may not be justified;
- Committee do not believe that the absence of carbon spars is scaring off people to getting into 16s;
- We could adopt carbon masts if everyone was prepared to go the cheapest types, however, it was inevitable that some will try and go for the more expensive ones to try and get that bit of a competitive edge;
- It was considered that we could adopt carbon spars on a progressive basis over a number of seasons, perhaps with poles first and then booms.

State Championship / Regatta format - .

- There was discussion on the interclub programme recently published for next season;
- The consensus was that it did not truly reflect the outcomes of the recent Survey conducted by the Association;
- There was a consensus that, in fact, the Survey results suggested the following:-

- Only 42% of our registered boats are interested in interclub racing;
 - This was not surprising given the average age of our sailors (38 years) and the fact that many have family commitments;
 - Club racing is regarded by a majority as being more important at this stage of our history, particularly due to the previous comment (average age and family commitments);
 - 70% of respondents to the Survey favoured a 4 heat format of some description for the States;
 - Only 20% favoured an 8 heat format;
 - 60% of the respondents did favour incorporating the State heats as an interclub regatta event.
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- The overall feeling of the meeting was that, as an Association, we should be encouraging clubs to concentrate on building their own fleets through a mixture of club racing, sponsorships, supporting junior fleets and building a synergy between the juniors (particularly the intermediate classes) and the 16 fleet at the club level. It was felt that, if we can again build our fleets at a few clubs with some younger blood, there may be a resurgence in the desire for travel and interclub racing.
 - All Commodores present agreed that, despite the poor attendance at some regattas last season, the format should be retained. As an Association we should still encourage the State Championships as the premier event. It was up to individual clubs who wished to host a regatta to promote the event themselves and provide an event that interclub boats will want to attend by their own choice rather than being "forced" to attend.

Lloyd Mulholland once again thanked all those who attended, especially those who had travelled a long distance (from Belmont and Illawarra), and agreed that it had again been a worthwhile exercise. He particularly wished to thank the Manly Club for hosting the meeting and supplying lunch for the attendees.

Meeting closed 4.20pm

NEXT MEETING – Manly Club on 17th May 2008