

NSW 16FT SKIFF ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF CLUB COMMODORES MEETING HELD 20/6/09
AT MANLY 16FT SKIFF SAILING CLUB

Meeting opened at 1.00pm (preceded by lunch, commencing at 12.15pm).

PRESENT: Lloyd Mulholland (Chair), Michael McMahon, Craig Corke, Craig Nicholls, Chris Mulholland, Riv Robson, Vance Skinner, Alexandra Deakin, Brad Andrew, John Andrew, Andrew Finney and Belinda Sherry.

APOLOGIES: Troy Dobinson (Belmont) and Mark Graham (13ft skiffs).

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

Lloyd Mulholland thanked the Commodores for attending. This is the seventh 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 indicated that, in view of the discussion that has recently re-ignited in regard to carbon spars, he had invited Peter Thorpe who sails at IYC to address the meeting. Peter works for CST Composites in their industrial area. He was accompanied by Scott Brockwell, who also works for CST.

Peter made the following points:-

- Suggested that the Association request a Business Proposal from CST which would outline and address the many issues that had been raised in discussion on the skiff forum;
- Recommended that the Association specify parameters, particularly for masts, such as required diameter, weight, balance point and any other restrictions considered appropriate to ensure consistency;
- Felt that the majority of sailors in the Class were looking forward to the introduction of carbon spars;
- Agreed that many were worried about the cost and durability of the carbon masts;
- Has had experience with a number of classes and has witnessed the successful transition from aluminium to carbon;
- Stated that the 18's had phased them in over several years – 2 seasons for the big mast then second mast in the third season;
- Suggested that the Association should not necessarily limit construction to one mast builder, as competition would help control price;
- Believes that there are inconsistencies in the current aluminium tube sections, which are essentially downpipe sections;
- Agreed that carbon would be a bit more expensive initially but, once sections became available for the second hand market, they would be more affordable to the higher handicap boats;
- Indicated an approximate price of early \$2k for a mast section with track (he did stress that this was very approximate, given that there were no specifications to work to, at present).

There was then a lengthy discussion, with delegates asking a number of questions.

Lloyd thanked Peter and Scott for their time and then continued the meeting inviting each Commodore or delegate to provide a report on their own club and that any issues be discussed as they arise.

Craig Nicholls (Manly)

- The Club's fleet increased slightly again this season with 30 registered skiffs and 23/25 regular starters; there may be a couple less boats next season (28), however, there will be 4 new hulls;
- There was a fleet of 10 13ft skiffs regularly sailing this season; expects a fleet of around 14 next season;
- The Club again won the Nationals for three of its fleets – 16's, F11's and MJ's;
- Flying 11 fleet was expected to increase to about 26 next season, whilst the MJ's should increase to around 24; lack of boat storage has become one of our primary limitations on fleet size, with demand far exceeding what can be provided;
- The Learn to Sail programme continued this season and put through about 60 kids aged between 5 and 14 (2 x 10 week courses – Sat. morning and 2 x 1 week school holiday courses); several have again moved into the junior ranks;
- Renegotiation of the Club lease with NSW Maritime Authority has finally been resolved and should be signed in the next few months, after almost ten years of protracted negotiation;
- The Club is still trading profitably and expect that the figures for this financial year will be the best ever;
- Sponsorships for the sailing activities are still strong; sponsorships for sailing activities across all classes would be around \$80-\$90k per annum; the Club has also successfully started to copy Belmont's practice of obtaining sponsorships from Club suppliers;
- The Club has resolved the legal issues that it had with its previous Secretary-Manager who departed in late 2006.

Alexandra Deakin (Middle Harbour)

- Their fleet for this season was 10 registered boats, a drop on last season; she expected that the numbers would increase to around 13 for next season;
- The 13ft skiff fleet is still relatively small with 6 boats this season and should be the same next season;
- They still have good numbers in their juniors - Skyriders, MJ's (about 19) and Flying 11s (8);
- The renewal of the lease on their Club premises with the Dept of Lands has just been signed this past week; it is for 28 years;
- Like many clubs, they are finding it difficult to get members to volunteer for the Board and to run sailing activities, but they do have a good core group;
- The Club experienced good trading this season;
- Trading ceased at the Club on 31 May to allow extensive renovations; they have a Business Plan, DA has been lodged but they still require approval of a loan before the work can proceed; the value of the renovation will be approx. \$3m.
- They have reached an agreement with a person (Rafael Khan) to operate a function centre as part of the top floor of the building; the centre will have a movable wall between it and the Club's operating area.

Vance Skinner (St George)

- Has just taken over as Commodore during this last season; still trying to learn the ropes;
- There were 6 registered skiffs this season; no increase expected next season;
- The Club has a strong fleet of skates who also support the Club very well;
- They also have about 8 Moths, 15 Flying Ants, 8/9 MG's, whilst there are about 18 Skyriders associated with the Sailing School located within the Club;

- Financially, the Club is still going ok, although patronage has reduced a little and cashflow is a problem;
- The eastern half of the underneath section of the Club has undergone major repairs to rectify the concrete cancer; this was the worst section, however, work will ultimately also have to be carried out under the western section;
- He is looking to put together a package to be sent to potential sponsors (Brad Andrew from Manly provided a copy of Manly's template, indicating that the Club was more than happy for other skiff clubs to use, if they found it helpful; he also said that the Manly Club was happy to share any of its ideas or initiatives with other clubs/delegates, if they thought that it might be of assistance).

Riv Robson (**Drummoyne**)

- Indicated that their fleet had stayed the same this season with about 5/6 boats starting each week; expect to stay the same next season;
- Junior numbers are down again;
- TS Hartley and Trailer Sailor fleets are going well with about 17 racing each week on Saturday at the same time as the skiffs;
- Approval was given by Maritime Authority for a 22 berth marina in front of the Club in 2008, but Board is still undecided about proceeding; DA has been approved;
- The Club is still holding off carrying out further extensions on the eastern side, with the DA having been approved by Council;
- Club is still trading very well, whilst other clubs in their area are either struggling or closing;
- A block of units are currently under construction on the property that the Club sold adjacent to the western side.

John Andrew (**Georges River**)

- There were 6 registered skiffs this season, however, their weekly fleet was again boosted at various times during the season by 3 or 4 Middle Harbour boats;
- Expect to drop by one boat next season;
- The Club has 18 Lasers, 6 Herons, 20 Sabots; 4 420's, 6 Flying Ants and a small fleet of Cherubs;
- Junior sailing takes place on Sunday morning;
- Financially, the Club hopes to cut square this year and the Board is confident that they have turned the corner;
- They have cut the number of poker machines by about half; this raised about \$275k;
- Arrangements are being made to spruce up the internal section of the Club with a repaint;
- The number of Board members will be cut from 12 to 7 this year;
- There has been a succession of CEO's in recent years; the Board has now taken a more active management role and they have a manager rather than CEO;
- A number of sailing regattas are scheduled for the next two seasons and that should assist trading and sailing activity.

Lloyd Mulholland (**Belmont**)

- Indicated that their fleet was a similar number to last season with around 23 starting each week; there should be about 25 next season, including two new hulls;
- Planning well in hand for the Australian 16ft (and 13ft) Skiff Championships in January 2010; they have allocated the whole upstairs area for social activity during the series;
- Their Pelican fleet has continued to increase again in popularity this season with 22 boats;
- Cherub (about 9 in all), F11's and Laser fleet going well;

- The 29er fleet have dropped off again slightly to about 9;
- The Club is trading well with another strong year;
- The concrete cancer problem with the section under the Club facing the Lake has now been completely repaired at a cost of \$2.5 million.
- The Club is currently undergoing extensive renovations in a couple of areas which should all be complete by September:-
 - New kitchen for bistro area;
 - Bistro area itself;
 - Rebuild of coffee shop;
 - Doubling of the outdoor gaming area (they have found that the machines in this area earn much more per unit);
 - Approximate total cost \$1.5 million.

There was no delegate or report from the **Illawarra** or **Port Hunter** clubs or the **13ft skiff class**.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. “Batwing” mainsail issue - Lloyd said that, as the Australian Commodore, he had spoken recently with the Australian President, Rob Wasson. Rob was particularly concerned at the snipping and in fighting that this issue seems to have created, particularly on the skiff forum. The skiffs that had produced mainsails this season that did not comply with the Association’s published interpretation of the rules covering mainsails appear to have tried to force their introduction by stealth, rather than consultation.

The Class has developed as a restricted “one design” in an effort to principally contain costs, thus the Class Rules have provisions included for sailors to approach the Association with any new ideas or variations to restrictions already in place. If the applicant was not happy with any negative ruling, the Rules require that the matter can be appealed and the issue must be referred to member clubs for voting. This occurred during last season on the issue of “batwing” mainsails and the voting supported the Association ruling.

Craig Nicholls from the Manly Club suggested that we should look at revamping Class Rules and phase in a “box rule”, similar to the 18’s. This would effectively provide a series of maximum measurements (and minimums in some isolated circumstances) which would make it much easier for measurers. For example, there might be a maximum linear luff, leach and foot (including roach) measurement for sails.

Lloyd Mulholland once again thanked all those who attended, especially those who had travelled a long distance (from Belmont), 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 and drinks for the attendees.

Meeting closed 3.55pm

NEXT MEETING – Manly Club (date to be set in May or June 2010).