

# Greg Elliott

## New Zealand designer cuts a niche in Australia

By JAMES HILL

There is no doubt that the current swing away from the IOR in offshore racing is creating a new and exciting era in the design of offshore yachts.

Now it seems production yacht builders as well as the Grand Prix racers are no longer locked into the typical "sharp diamond" shape of the IOR racer. Instead, designers are now breaking away from this stereotype and drawing more natural and intuitively fast shapes which are also nicer to sail.

One of the designers to most benefit from this swing to the pure and natural style of offshore sailboats is Auckland designer, Greg Elliott. He has long been an advocate of designs which are unfettered by any rule considerations, yet also comfortable and easy to handle.

Elliott in fact epitomises the New Zealand attitude to yacht design, which has never accepted rating systems like the IOR because they tend to create artificially slow features. Like many of the popular Kiwi designers, Elliott has simply steered clear of the IOR because it never caught on in N.Z.

Elliott's commitment to the local style of fast, performance cruising/racing yacht has in fact made him a popular designer in N.Z. ever since he first took up the profession seriously in 1977.

However, it has only been since the weakening of IOR influence that his boats have started to win acceptance in Australia.

Elliott's big break into the offshore scene came in the mid 1980s with a fast 45 footer called 'Party Pro', which featured a flush deck with fore and aft cockpit trenches. This boat won many races on PHRF (Performance Handicap Rating Factor) as well as line honours before Elliott lost the boat on a reef just 70 miles short of the finish in the Auckland Suva race.



A good example of one of Elliott's fast cruisers 'Freewind Spirit'.

The fame of this yacht led to commissions for two very fast and lightweight mini-maxis of 55ft LOA 'Future Shock' in Auckland and 'Rager' in Sydney. The former in particular notched up an impressive race performance, including line victories in races like the Auckland Suva and Sydney Southport.

Elliott also found success with the very quick little E 5.9metre trailer sailer, then with other designs like the quick 40 footer, 'Transformer', a fast cruiser/racer. Then came the 12 metre 'Peacemaker' which was the subject of a furore over rating at the 1987 Hamilton Island Race Week.

At this particular time the Hamilton series used the Channel Handicap System for non-IOR boats. There was heated debate over whether the N.Z. boat met the requirements of this handicap system, and while it was eventually disqualified, the yacht won a moral victory on the race course.

The 'Peacemaker' affair made Elliott even more determined that the offshore scene should move away from complex rating systems. However, of late he has been commercially realistic enough to accommodate the growing popularity of the IMS rating system. Elliott's latest designs

feature rigs and interiors which have been carefully drawn so as not to incur any unnecessary penalties under IMS.

While he said the offshore scene would be better off operating under some form of performance handicap system like PHRF, Elliott can accept the IMS because of its neutral effect on hull.

"Basically the IMS allows the designer to follow his own thoughts in this regard, though I think it's a bit restrictive and conservative in terms of its rig penalties," adds Elliott.

Elliott believes the IMS penalties on full length battens in mainsails, plus its penalties on masthead spinnakers on fractional rigs (they are then measured as full masthead rigs) are somewhat regressive, but otherwise you can turn out a pretty fast boat under IMS.

His latest two designs; the E 11 metre and E 12 metre are both dual IMS/PHS designs with the option of either a cruising version with coamings or a sports model without coamings and a basic IMS interior.

One of Elliott's latest 12 metre production models, 'Sassy II' is a sports model which recently helped the N.Z. team to victory in the Kenwood Cup in the IMS division.

The new 12 metre very well sums up the Elliott philosophy on design. The ends are cut off in the traditional Kiwi skiff-yacht manner, but at the same time the boat is not just a downwind flier as the profile would suggest. In fact, the hull sections are wide and powerful and overall stability is at a level which ensures that it is also fast upwind.

Combined with relatively wide and buoyant end sections, the Elliott design is potentially very fast in fresh to strong winds. Elliott is careful to keep the bow sections relatively full and buoyant and this helps balance up the hull lines, and therefore keeps the bows from digging in when heeled, or running fast.

Elliott's designs lean towards the light end of the displacement scale, though not as much as some of the others in the light brigade like Jim Young and our own Jim Inglis. Elliott keeps the hull sections rounded and with enough depth to ensure good all-round performance in light airs. His designs are much better performers to windward than



'Sassy II' the racing version of 12 metre Elliott design, sailing at the 1992 Kenwood Cup in Hawaii.

# YACHT DESIGN – New Zealand designer cuts a niche in Australia

many of the other Kiwi style designs. The soft roundness of his hull forms also make the lines attractive to Australian sailors.

Elliott also favours good stability by keeping the bilges firm, yet reduced enough at waterline level to reduce wetted surface area. He also packs the majority of the ballast down low in a keel bulb.

Constructoin is kept light by typically using foam sandwich cores and semi exotic E and S glass laminates. However, Elliott otherwise tries to avoid expensive costs in his boats because he is a strong believer that yachts need to be "affordable as well as fun to sail". For this latter reason he especially likes to see his boats built as glass production models so as to reduce the cost to the yachting market.

In the rig department Elliott generally goes for a fuss-free fractional rig without runners, or even backstay. However, in the two latest designs shown here, the rig does have semi-swept shrouds plus runners and backstay to allow fine-tuning of the rig.

If the boat is to be used for club racing on flat water the runners could be strapped forward to make tacking easier. However, the runners are there to help the boat get into "race mode" quickly when sailed more seriously.

Here in Australia Elliott is well represented by a number of production designs. Pacesetter Yachts of Bilpin, Sydney, produce the 5.9 metre TS as well as the quick little 9 metre IMS/PHS design and the 1050, which is a great cruiser/racer.

Concept Yachts also product the quick semi-offshore style Elliott 7.8 metre TS while Sailing Scene import the new Elliott 7 metre sports TS (25 built in N.Z. to date). In Victoria John Scarlett builds the E7.4 TS which is a combined racer/cruiser, as well as an earlier Elliott 6.5 metre TS.

The Elliott 11 metre and 12 metre are built by Elliott Marine in Auckland. Two boats have already been sold to Japan where Elliott has had a strong following ever since 'Peacemaker' (under the mame of 'Raika' placed second in division in the 1991 Melbourne Osaka race.

Given the limited sailing experience of the two Japanese girl crew, the Japanese were

greatly impressed by the performance of this Elliott design.

Elliott also has a new 15 metre custom IMS under way in N.Z. as well as the design of a new Whitbread 60 class yacht. Although there is some doubt about the latter boat being built by its N.Z. syndicate, Elliott has more than enough work going with Japanese orders.

While he is best known as a racer/cruiser designer, Elliott is also most happy to get involved in pure cruising yachts. His attractive 13.8 metre luxury cruising design 'Freewind Spirit' is a recent commission which blends the hull concepts of his racing designs into a boat with more load-carrying displacement and a comfortable cockpit and accommodation.

Elliott's newest design, the 1100 racer/cruiser, incorporates the following features:

- \* Highly competitive offshore
- \* IMS optimised
- \* Short handed ability
- \* Dual purpose interior
- \* Good looks

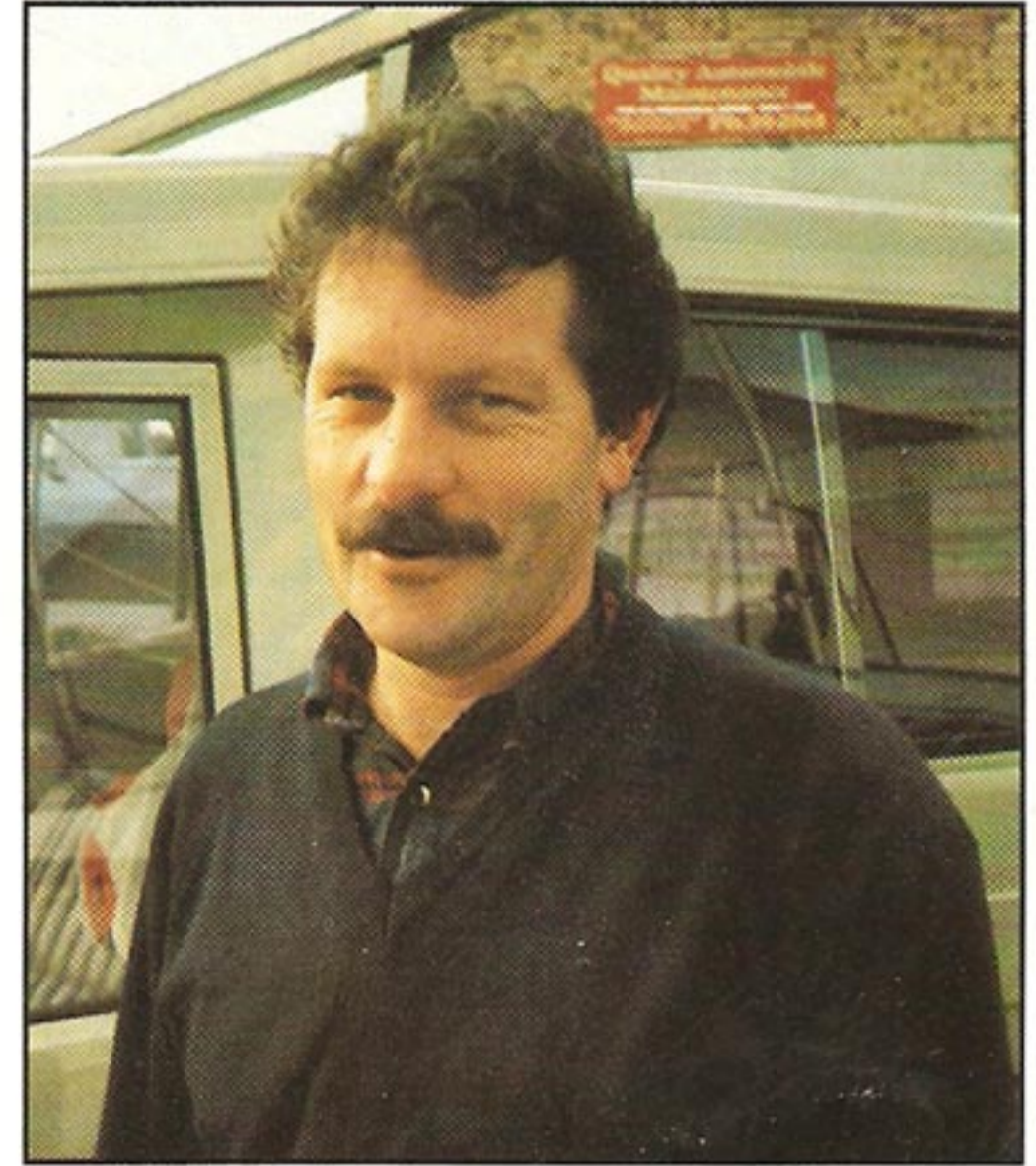
The primary requirements for this racer/cruiser were for a competitive offshore yacht that also has the handling characteristics of a safe and comfortable, short handed racer or cruiser that could be optimised to the IMS rule.

Elliott views the yacht as a round up of his most recent ideas in racer/cruisers. Drawing on knowledge gained from his own experience in recent offshore events and from ongoing research and development he says:

"Much consideration has been given to the offshore capabilities of the yacht and it will offer greater speed potential on all points of sail than its forebears of a similar size and at the same time provide safe, enjoyable sailing either short handed or fully crewed."

The Elliott 1100 has a medium beam, stable hull form with minimal wetted surface but generous reserve buoyancy to increase stability on demand. Sufficient freeboard and topside flare provide dry and comfortable cruising. There is a well styled coach house forward of a large open cockpit.

Emphasis has been placed on creating a comfortable interior layout. The functional simplicity of the interior is the practical solution



Greg Elliott: a talented New Zealand designer dedicated to the naturally fast hull shape.

to the dual mode necessary for both racing and cruising and it can be altered to suit an owner's requirements.

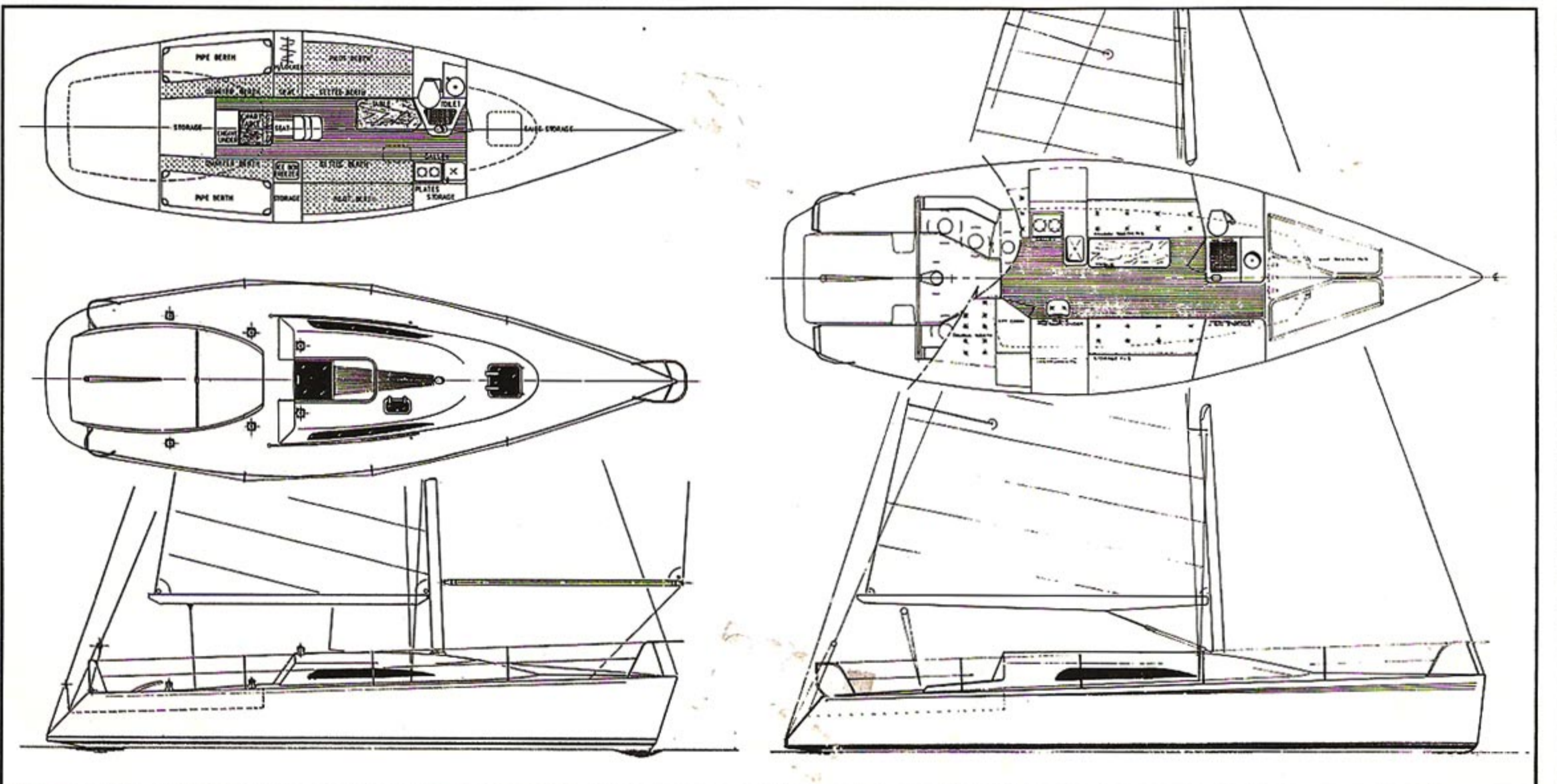
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## ELLIOTT 12M SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 12.00m  
LWL: 11.2m  
Beam: 4.1m  
Draft: 2.45m  
Displacement: 5450kg  
Headroom: 1.9m  
Main & fore triangle: 83m<sup>2</sup>

## ELLIOTT 11M SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 11.00m  
DWL: 9.8m  
Beam: 3.48m  
Draft: 2.2m  
Displacement: 3980kg



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