effectiveness of the system himself. On buying his Elliott 7.8 from Sydney's Modern Concept Yachts last year, his intention was to rig it as a flat-out racer. The boat was modified during building to carry a small cabin top (from an Elliott 7m), giving more deck space, and the cockpit was enlarged. The mast had a fibreglass tip installed to provide better gust response and

Eickmeyer, the proprietor of Mornington's Performance Sails, made his own sail wardrobe for the boat.

Initially, Hot to Trot carried a standard pole and spinnaker configuration — it was when he raced in the annual trailable yacht event at Victoria's Marlay Point that Eickmeyer first realised the alternative. "The Elliott builders in Sydney brought down a boat with an asymmetrical set up to race in the Marlay Point. At one stage we were racing them with our conventional masthead spinnaker on a beam reach. They had up a fractional asymmetric kite and were much quicker. We decided we had to have one."

The Sydney boat however, was using its standard pole strapped to the deck, retracting along the deck on a track. "It was pretty ugly," says Eickmeyer. His experience in 14's and 18's told him a built-in retractable bowsprit pole was a workable alternative and he set about installing such a system on Hot to Trot.

The modifications were relatively simple and took about a week. After calculating the stresses involved when the kite was loaded up, Eickmeyer opted for a carbon pole — for its high strength and light weight — instead of aluminium. He located a broken section of 160mm spinnaker pole from a two tonner (weighing around 2kg and 2.7m long) and then installed an aluminium housing tube in the bow of Hot to Trot. Its inner end was fixed in a purpose-built bulkhead inside the cabin.

The housing tube was approximately one metre long and fitted with teflon bearings to support the carbon pole. It was wrapped in uni-directional fibreglass to hold it in place and emerged from the starboard side of the hull. "The boat hadn't been designed for it and there was a large block of solid timber in the bow," says Eickmeyer, so 'C' Class cat builder, Barry Marmion, assisted with the modifications. Both Spunspar and Goldspar in Sydney are now making special aluminium sections for this type of task.

Eickmeyer then built two spinnakers for the system. One was a 1/2 ounce masthead, and the other a 3/4 ounce fractional. "The design features on these types of sails are critical," he says. "The luff lengths are important and there are certain percentages, lengths and

formulas developed for the 18ft Skiffs that need to be adhered to. A lot of 18 technology goes into it."

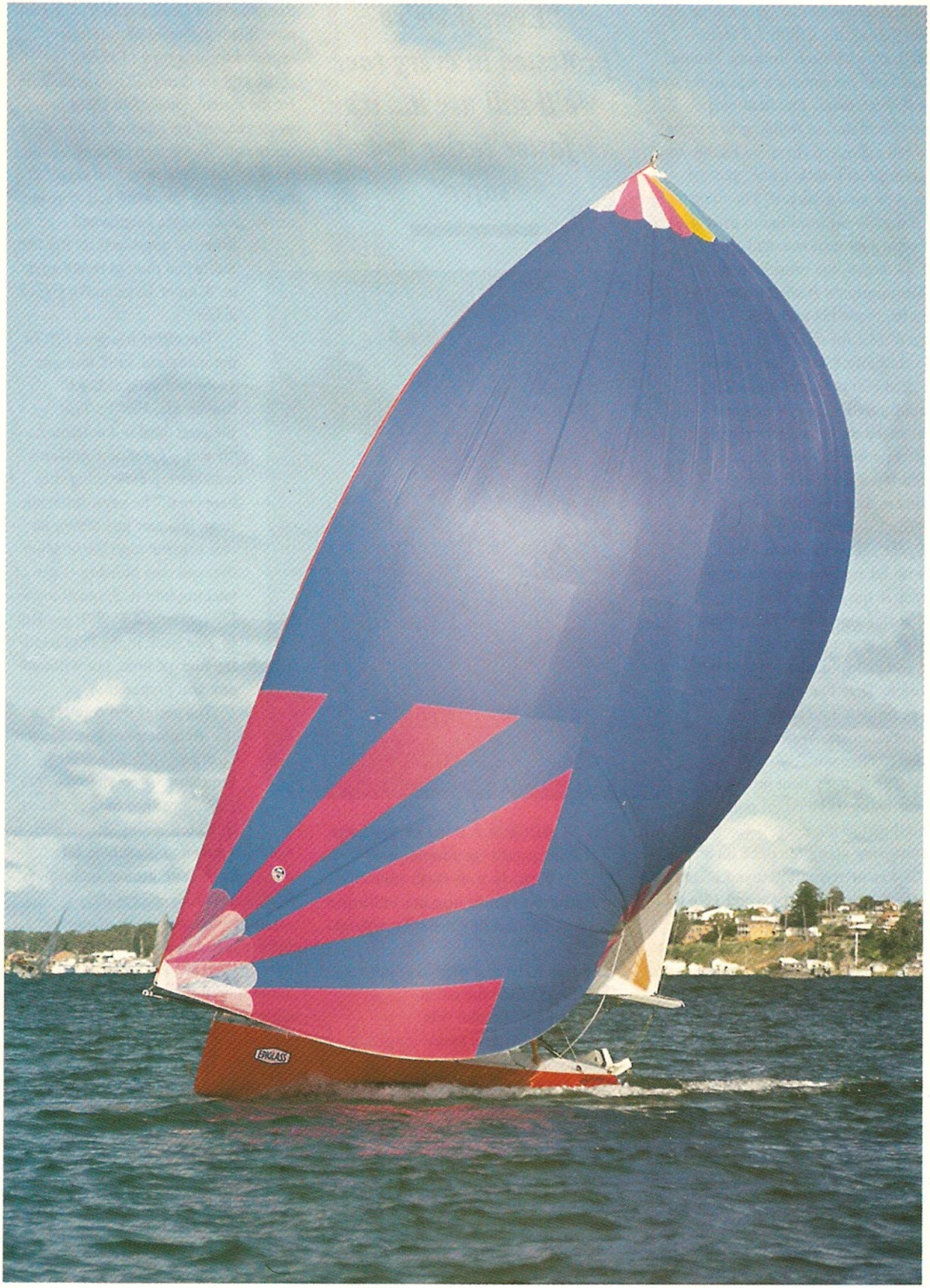
The effort has paid off. In the inaugural 1993 trailable yacht nationals at Lake Macquarie, Hot To Trot finished third in Division A. "It was a good performance, considering everything that happened," he says, referring to an incident just before he was scheduled to leave when the boat was holed by a car backing into it. A quick repair job (at around $5000) got Hot to Trot back in the contest in the nick of time, but without any real preparation.

The series did show that the asymmetrical kite was not so effective dead square in light airs of less than 5 knots. Eickmeyer has now resolved this problem by carrying a standard pole and parachute kite for these specific conditions. In stronger breezes Eickmeyer says the asymmetric set-up is an advantage all the time, and is designed to be sailed between 90 and 120 degrees. Last autumn he won the Ocean Racing Club of Victoria's two-handed round-the-bay race, and later sailed in the Hamilton Island Race Week, finishing sixth overall.

Eickmeyer believes that if intransigence among the rule-makers both here and overseas can be overcome, the asymmetric kite system will have a big future. "Even if we're protested from every race we'll still use it," he says, "It's faster, easier, and safer."

"Even if we're protested in every race we'll still use it... it's faster easier and safer"

ABOVE: **A third at the Lake Macquaire Nationals, a win in Victoria and sixth overall at Hamilton Island speaks volumes for the asymmetric set-up.**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