



The new Elliott 7s have proved a popular drawcard. Below: Training Manager, Guy Pilkington.

# A great way to spend a weekend

The criteria for the Squadron's Lion Foundation Youth Programme reads, 'Candidates must be between the ages of 16-21 years, must have previous yachting experience and portray a genuine commitment to intensive keelboat racing.'

There is no doubt about it commitment is the key word here. Commitment on the part of the Programme's Training Manager Guy Pilkington and unswerving commitment on the part of the young people taking part.

The Programme runs for 11 months of the year. Racing is held nearly every weekend from May to November. In December, the boats are taken to Kawau Island to run the National Youth Training Week and the Programme resumes early in January continuing until the end of March.

For each year's intake, it means full-on weekends.

## Words & Pictures By Debra Douglas

Participants meet every Saturday and Sunday at the Squadron for a short run or fitness workout at 9am. Then there is a briefing before the boats are rigged. Racing starts at 10.30am, continuing until 4pm and at 5.30pm a debrief takes place. The Programme completes three sections of keelboat training, beginning with drills, then

fleet racing, followed by match racing.

"When candidates are interviewed for a position on the Programme they are told it is a huge commitment," says Pilkington. "They sign the contract, but if they don't like it, they can go and do something else. It's a case of take it or leave it. We say, 'This is what is expected from you and now it is up to you to make it work.' There is only one boss and that's me. It's not a democracy, it's a dictatorship. Once they get that fixed in their head, we get on just fine."

So members need to show commitment to the Programme, but what about a commitment to winning on the water?

Pilkington: "Winning is important, but it is also important to be part of something. That's the hardest thing for some. Teenagers often don't get the opportunity to commit to something for a long period."

Pilkington believes his





The Squadron's Youth Training Programme was born out of the 1986-87 America's Cup at Fremantle. The event, which lifted yachting in New Zealand to a new level of professionalism, prompted the Squadron to form a programme to give young people with ability the opportunity to receive intensive theoretical and practical instruction in the various aspects of competitive keelboat racing.

The programme operates 10 Elliott 7m light displacement keelboats, which are sailed with crews of four. The 2010/2011 membership fee of \$1575 covers more than 60 days of sailing and includes a clothing set. In addition to the annual coaching fees, each applicant is required to become a Junior Member of the Squadron. Each season the Youth Programme Committee supports youth teams to attend various fleet and match racing regattas nationally and internationally.

structured programme is a good look for prospective employers: "If members are entering the work force and are asked what they have been doing for the past year, they can recount their experience in the Programme. It shows they are dedicated to doing something fulltime."

When Pilkington was a keen young sailor back in 1988, he applied to join the squad, but the training manager, Harold Bennett, told him he was too old. It wasn't until 2005 when he was working as a rigger at Matrix Masts Ltd that he heard the Programme needed a new coach. Now it's Pilkington who conducts the interviews and makes those life-changing decisions.

"The best part is that you see young people come into the Programme very green and lacking in people skills. Generally they know how to sail, but lack maturity. When they leave, they are a better person all round. You feel like you have an influence on their lives and hopefully they will move onto better and bigger things. For sure they have also made invaluable contacts in both the sailing and business world."

There are 32 trainees, including nine girls, on this year's Programme and depending on age, attitude and expectations they will stay from one to three years. The majority live in Auckland, but a couple come from Hamilton and Tauranga every weekend and there are two overseas members – from Perth and Ireland. Some are still at school, some at university and others are working.



*Above: Maintenance forms part of the Programme activities. Below: So does fitness.*

Pilkington: "We try to have a first-year on every boat with the second and third years, so the youngsters benefit from a mentoring effect. The 'first years' are generally shy and quiet when they join, but after a couple of months you see their personalities come out. They quickly gain confidence and by the end of the year they are as cocky as the others.

"The Programme has had a very successful 23 years. We have incredible support from sponsors, the Youth Committee and Race Management Committee, as well as from Roy Dickson and the Dickson family. The philosophy is sound, but I think it's time to be more proactive and market what we do,

especially now with the exciting new fleet."

Pilkington says the introduction of the new Elliott 7s has given everyone more of keelboat feel. With four on board, as opposed to three on the Elliott 6s, there's another person in the mix and another personality to deal with. This can only help develop the skipper's leadership skills.

"But not everyone is going to become an America's Cup skipper. You are not going to get one every year – perhaps one every five years. What you will get are well-rounded good sailors, who can do most things on a boat.

"And hey ... it's a great way to spend a weekend."







## Charting a course to sailing success

Twenty-year-old Danielle Bowater, who works for North Sails, is looking to compete on the international match racing circuit. She is on her third year of the Programme and after two years on the bow she is helming this year.

Danielle: "I come from a dinghy racing background and see this as enabling me to up my match racing game by sailing year-round. I'm not a huge off-shore racing fan, but I'm definitely a competitive short-course sailor."

"I certainly recommend the Programme. It is not just for the individual sailor, but encourages you to teach others and lift the standard of all the members."

"It's also so much fun. You can hang out with your friends every weekend and do what you love."

Edwin De Laat is in Year Nine at Western College. He has a background in dinghy sailing and sees his time at the Squadron as giving him the opportunity to go keelboat racing and eventually ocean racing.

"It is pretty demanding, so is Guy. You can't hide; everyone has to do the same things. I'm in my first year, but no

one gives me a hard time. It's all about the team."

Engineering student David Hazard (18) says he doesn't find it hard to get out of bed early every Saturday and Sunday morning to get to training. He's in his first year after being introduced to the scheme at a National Youth Training Week at Kawau. "I've been sailing for a long time,



but always wanted to get into match racing and the America's Cup action. There's now plenty of opportunity to make contacts in the sailing world. There are heaps of good people here who sail at a high level."

Twenty-year-old Ryan Scott has come from Dublin to participate. With a background in dinghy and keelboat racing and wanting to progress as far as he can in the sport, he says it made sense to come to join a structured Programme.

Jack Taylor (20) credits the Youth Programme for getting him a job at Emirates Team New Zealand as a member of the shore crew. "It gave me a foot in the door." In his second year, Jack says Guy is a great coach, instilling the right attitude towards stickability.

"It also gets you involved with different types of yacht racing and there's a lot of networking, which can only be good. It's definitely come up to my expectations."

*Above: From left David Hazard, Edwin DeLaat and Danielle Bowater.  
Left: Jack Taylor*





## YOUTH TRAINING PROGRAMME REPORT by Guy Pilkington



**Celebrating Christmas with our sponsors:** With the launch of our fantastic new boats we have been able to have our very first sponsors' Friday Rum Race, and it was a great turnout. The Elliott 7s are fantastic for 'jump onboard and go sailing', so the Youth Training Committee invited our sponsors and supporters for a Rum Race on Friday 12 November.

More than 20 sponsors responded and we put eight boats on the water. Our thanks to those who joined us and we will certainly schedule another one in the New Year. The top four finishers were:

**1<sup>st</sup>, Doyle Sails** – Richard Bouzaid, Chris McMaster and Programme member Benny Butcher. – pictured top right.

**2<sup>nd</sup>, Watts & Hughes** – Dennis Cresswell and Nigel Harris (Watts & Hughes Construction Regional Managers), John Rountree (Youth Training Committee Chairman) and Programme member Sylvie Admore.

**3<sup>rd</sup>, Soar Printing** – Tom and Lee Kelly (Soar Printing), Adrian (Southern Spars) and Programme member Jamie Dawson.

**4<sup>th</sup>, International** – Brent Gribble and Matt Hart (International), Karleen Dixon (id Sign) and Programme member Ryan Scott.

**Our Wednesday series** on the Elliott 7s is going very well and our thanks to those members who have supported this event.

It is always a very busy end of year for us with the Telecom New Zealand Match Racing Championships on the same time as two international match racing events in Australia.

Roy Dickson travelled to the Australian events as coach and has decided it will be his last tour as coach for the overseas events, but has informed me that he is quite prepared to make himself available for events in New Zealand. Thank you Roy for all your time and passing on such a wealth of knowledge to our members; they certainly love travelling with you.

December has certainly crept up on



us and we are sailing the Elliott 7's up to Kawau for the National Youth Training Week and back on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> for our final Christmas pack up. It has been a bumper year for the Programme. We are loving the new boats and looking forward to more summer racing after the holidays.

I would like to thank the members for all their hard work and good sailing, there has been plenty on but everyone has pitched in and go-the-job-done.

### Telecom New Zealand Match Racing Championships

Our two teams sailed well with the Youth team, helmed by Dan Pooley, finishing 7<sup>th</sup> overall. Chris Dickson helmed our other boat, on which I was crew. We finished

5<sup>th</sup> overall. We enjoyed the event and the challenge of the bigger boats, despite being beaten twice by the Youth crew.

Thirty one out of 45 sailors in this event were current Programme members or graduates, including the entire teams of Phil Robertson, Reuben Corbett, Will Tiller, David Wood and Dan Pooley. Our congratulations to Phil and his team for a very convincing win and also on winning the Sunseeker Australia Cup in Perth.

### Roy Dickson, on two Australian events ... HARKEN Cup Youth Match Racing Championships, Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club

After taking some time to adjust to the different characteristics of the Force 24s,





### Thanks to Guy By Danielle Bowater

All the members of the Lion Foundation Youth Training Programme, affectionately known as 'the kids', thank Guy for another awesome year! For organising *Sister Moonshine*, *Prince Hal*, *Playbuoy* and pushing us to sail on bigger boats and improve our sailing. The bridge to big boats / competitive racing is forever diminishing with the effort you put in. Cheers Guy – and thanks to Jane and the kids for lending us Guy every weekend.

our team sailed very well to go through the second round robin undefeated and then finish 3<sup>rd</sup> overall. To their credit, they beat the overall winner of the Round Robins into 4<sup>th</sup> place. There is no question that all of the team skippered by Codie Banks learned a lot in both boat handling and match racing in a variety of conditions.

As a team they were delightful to be with and the RPAYC Commodore commented that their performance on the water and their conduct and presentation off the water was of a very high standard.

Our special thanks to our wonderful hosts Trevor Hannah and Annie Taylor who, once again, were absolutely wonderful with their hospitality and freedom of their home.

### MUSTO International Youth Match Racing Championships, Cruising Yacht Club of Australia

Sailing Elliott 6s, the two teams were already familiar with the boats and sailed them well. Their boat handling and general sailing was very competitive, but penalties were expensive.

It was credit to David Hazard skippering in an international regatta for the first time – and his crew – to perform well through the second round robin and finish 3<sup>rd</sup> overall after going down in the semi finals to a very polished Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club team, which had just won the Harken Cup.

Ryan Scott and crew sailed well, but were beaten in close quarters starts and by too many penalties. They finished 6<sup>th</sup> on a countback, but on general performance should have made the semis.

Our thanks to the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia for another fantastic regatta and particularly to Pam Scrivenor and the owners of Playstation, Utopia and Live Wire for the accommodation.

### Club Racing – Young 88 Sprints

Practicing what I preach, I have been helming *Sister Moonshine* with our Youth

team for the Thursday Young 88 Sprints. It is a very competitive series and keeps my tactics, rules and boat handling up-to-scratch. I am certainly enjoying the racing.

We are currently 2<sup>nd</sup> overall for the series, after missing a couple of races and also one OCS. But Harold always says, 'If you are not over in one out of 10 starts then you are not trying hard enough.'

The Youth team are sailing exceptionally well and learning a lot. We are competitive with the top Young 88s, which is fantastic and the team enjoys mixing with such a great group of keen yachties.

### Thanks and Best Christmas Wishes

It is very important to sincerely thank the Lion Foundation and all our boat sponsors and suppliers. We are immensely grateful for their continued support. Don't forget to support the people and companies who support us.

Thank you to Len Light *Prince Hal*, Dave and Fiona Stanton *Sister Moonshine* and Roy Dickson *Playbuoy* for allowing Youth crews to sail their boats.

We wish our loyal race management team of Gerald, Peter, Neil and Daggy, a fantastic holiday with their friends and family – you certainly deserve it!

I am looking forward to summer cruising on *Playbuoy* with my family; we might see you at Kawau or Great Barrier Island.

Special thanks to **Membership Secretary Mary Grant**, who has always been one of the Programme's biggest fans. She has always been such a friendly, fun-loving person to work with and has always been so interested in the Youth members and graduates. We will miss you.

The Programme has so many outstanding sponsors, supporters, young sailors, graduates and wonderful members, we thank you for everything you do and wish you and your families a safe and very Merry Christmas.

Guy Pilkington

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