

Elliot 7 metre

By JAMES HILL

Not since the days when Bruce Farr was starting to make his mark has a Kiwi designer made such a broad impact on the yachting scene this side of the Tasman.

The name of Greg Elliott has been popping up more and more in racing results, particularly in the recent Sydney Hobart Classic where yachts of his design were the most successful.

The 55 foot 'Kodak Express', which is by no means a new design, amazed race officials by coming in third over the line ahead of top pocket maxis such as 'Bobsled' and 'Brindabella'.

Meanwhile, in the new IMS division Elliott's stock production 12m 'Zero' fought for the handicap lead till the last 20 miles, before placing third to the two latest custom Farr boats.

Elliott's work is not restricted to the glamorous "big boat" side of sailing and, if anything, Elliott may well end up being better remembered in yachting history for his quick little trailer-sailers.

Elliott has three designs in production in Australia, all of which have done well on the race course, the little Elliott 5.9m, the Elliott 7.4m and the maxi Elliott 7.8m.

However, the design which has been making more waves than any other in the TS scene is the new Elliott 7m, which was released onto the market only last year.

This lightweight racer/cruiser takes the racing concept further than most production trailer yachts and has put the runs on the board with numerous wins in trailer yacht races and regattas.

Last year the design won the New Zealand Lake Brunmer 24 hour race, both on line honours and handicap, and repeated the effort in the keenly fought EpiGlass Olympic Sail regatta at Tauranga.

Meanwhile, over in Sydney, local agent, Kerlie Corlett, bought four boats for local fitting out, one of which he kept for his wife and himself to sail.

The attractive red-hulled 'Need For Speed' has subsequently been the family racing machine for Kerlie and his wife Alison, replacing the Noelex 25 which they had previously sailed with great success.

With all the Elliott 7's proving they are the quickest medium sized TS on the local scene, there is now considerable interest as to how they will fare in the inaugural National series for Trailer Yachts in April this year. Most betting, at present, is that they will be odds on for a handicap win because they have the legs to beat our best local designs such as the Spider 22 and MASRM 720.

Putting aside the issue of handicaps, however, the Elliott has already impressed a lot of racing sailors simply because it is such a fast, fun boat for its size and surprisingly affordable. In fact, its ability to go onto the plane very early in the wind range on a reach sees it often sailing up with the bigger, more expensive trailer yachts like Rocket 780s and Beale 780s.



Kiwi flier sports a large chute for extra pace downwind. Rig was developed by TS ace Steve Kiely.

The fact that it's such a quick boat, yet not that large that it can't be easily whisked out of the water by a normal sized car, makes this an attractive boat to the excitingly racing sailor.

The cabin does not have any galley facilities, but is big enough for sleep-overs at weekend regattas, or several nights away. The blister style cabin is purposely kept short to maximise cockpit space for racing, yet there are four good sized berths and room for personal gear.

Kerlie Corlett and his wife regularly sail their own boat in TYA regattas and the Pittwater twilight series with a crew of young children. Their son Danny, his mate and their daughter Nicole are all under the age of 11, but they have been able to make a

worthwhile contribution because the gear and equipment on the boat is relatively light to handle and not beyond a family crew.

Kerlie admits the Elliott is a much more sensitive and responsive boat to steer than a normal style trailer yacht. At the same time he maintains it is an easier boat to sail in strong winds because it is so easy to drive and doesn't load up on the helm. Provided you know what you are doing, it is quite safe for family day-sailing.

The Elliott is certainly one of the new era of inshore race boats which have the ability to plane early and achieve semi-dinghy style performance. This makes the boat exciting to sail, provided you have enough crew weight on the gunwale to help sit the boat up and keep pressure in the rig.

Latest fast trailable from the Elliott stable

The large cockpit has the seating out wide like a Grand Prix ocean racer so crew weight is always positioned for maximum effect on stability. If you get a light patch you simply move some weight inboard by getting the crew to sit on the floor. The cockpit is also shallow and open to the stern like an IOR 50 footer so you can very easily move from side to side in tacks and gybes.

Not having any life rails further strengthens the impression that the boat is a big Laser, and certainly allows the crew more freedom of movement as they work the boat from the gunwale.

The deck layout is certainly Laser-like in its practical simplicity with all sheets and halyards serviced by the two Barent two-speed 17s. Since the boats are built in Australia, the rest of the gear is also Australian with Ronstan C-cleats for the jammers and a Ronstan catamaran style, low profile, recirculating-ball mainsheet traveler with 6:1 mainsheet with tail coming out of the bottom ratchet block.

The rig also follows the current accepted trend of using a three-point stay system without a backstay or runners. It's a simple but functional setup for around the buoys racing and trailer-sailing. The mast is a locally made Goldspar with a set of wide spreaders which anchor at chain plates on the gunwale for maximum rig support.

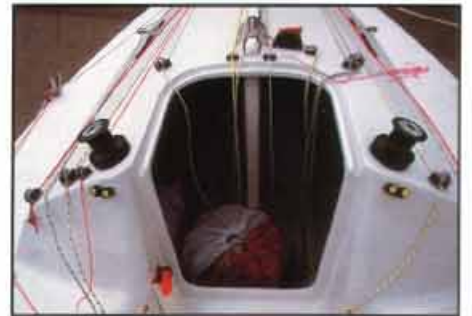
Following the dinghy rig trend first started by Elliott, this boat has the biggest number one genoa sheeting ahead of the swept-spreader on tracks just outside the cabin coach house. What the rig then lacks in overlap sail area is simply taken care of by having a bigger, taller sail plan with a generous 18.5 sq m mainsail.



Grand Prix style cockpit keeps crew weight on the gunwale and allows easy boarding from stern.



The clean efficient lines of the Elliott 7m are revealed on the trailer.



The cockpit work station has Barent 17s looking after all strings as well as centreboard lift.



Elliott powers along on a reach, hitting ten knots.

Latest fast trailable from the Elliott stable

In practice, the Elliott 7m is a very easy boat to sail and the rig seems to automatically depower at the top of the mainsail just at the right time to keep the boat from over-loading. However, in winds of 15 knots or more you need to keep the headsail slightly sprung and "twisted" in the leech to keep the boat from pointing too high and, thereby, killing off the pace.

Looking at the boat out of the water, it becomes apparent that the readiness to plane is due not just to the relative lightness of the boat, but the flatness of the underwater sections. Another key feature is the way the bow sections are not as fine as most boats this size. In fact, they are quite full and obviously help to promote early planing.

Power to carry a bigger than normal sail area is achieved by powerful hull sections with a tight bilge turn and a low freeboard. The hull has a lot of natural stability which is further enhanced by the deep, slim fin keel with a 250kg bulb on the bottom.

As already noted, the accommodation is simply four berths, but there is room below for an owner to add a portable stove if he wished. There is also provision for a Porta-Potti to be fitted under the forward bunk, but most race boat owners would probably not want the extra weight aboard.

Quality of finish is certainly very good for a boat in this category and price range, and is backed up by a strong construction that has Termanto 12mm foam sandwiched between biaxial E-glass layers. The deck has 10mm foam with Coremat in the blister cabin to allow easy attachment of deck fittings.

Features the author particularly likes about this Kiwi newcomer, apart from its clean, stylish lines, are the lift-out hatch cover which allows the main hatch to be used for spinnaker drops, and the floor-mounted mainsheet traveler which allows easy movement around the cockpit area.

While it is ostensibly a race boat, the Seven, in fact, adds up to a very nice, fuss-free boat for day-sail cruising. In fact, it would be also well suited to camper-sailing with the optional boom awning over the large cockpit area.

ELLIOT 7 METRE SPECIFICATIONS:

LOA: 7m
LWL: 6.2m
Beam: 2.45m
Draft: 1.6m
Displacement: 600kg
Ballast: 250kg



The Elliott 7m flying along.



The Elliott 7m 'Need For Speed' lives up to its name.



Cabin area is simple, yet functional for overnight regattas.



The Elliott's secret weapon is its full-volume bow for get up and go performance.



"Need For Speed" the Corlett families' racing machine dodges the moorings.