



Elliott 770 Sports Trailerable

Photos and story by James Hill

As we move towards the latter part of the decade it's becoming clear that one of the most significant sailing trends of this era has been the advent of a truly modern breed of trailer yachts.

We've had a few fast trailer yachts in earlier decades, but nothing like the exciting and slick sports machines we have today. Also never before have trailer yachts dominated the racing scene under nine metres boat length.

Offshore keelers still rule the roost over nine metres but below this size the racing scene has been captured by a new style of sports trailerable. Boats like the Melges 24 have established this trend over seas.

These are by no means all the designs available, with quite a few others coming onto the market. These production designs vary from the trapeze-powered Hobie Magic 25 through to the slightly more conventional types like the Elliott 770, Lyons 8 and Fremantle 8.

However, the overall common denominator with all these boats is ultra-light displacement, skiff-style hull ends and skiff-inspired sail rigs.

The retractable bow pole and asymmetric spinnaker is the most striking feature of this new breed - the one thing which really sets them apart on the race course. However, that's only part of the package which includes really fun racing performance and very functional deck layouts.

These new breeds are unashamedly race boats first and foremost, however some make more concessions to accommodation and cruising comfort than others. Such a boat is the Elliott 770, which came onto the market only about two years ago and is locally built in Melbourne by New Yachts.

This design grew out of the success of the smaller Elliott 7 which has been quite successful in Aussie waters and is now an established one-design class here. The Elliott 7s speed really opened many sailors eyes to what "performance" was really about, and it led to a demand for a next-step design for those who wanted something bigger.

The local market already had the Elliott 7.8m, but this somewhat older design was deemed by some to be a touch too big and expensive to meet the requirements of weekend trailer-racers.

Speed to Burn

YACHT REVIEW



There was also a feeling that any proposed big sister to the Elliott 7 should also be a strict one-design from the very outset (some Elliott 7.8s were customised) with strict licensing of builders. The result was the Elliott 770 one-design.

This new design looks a lot like a bigger sister of the Elliott 7, and in fact has the same cabintop. This means there is a bigger cockpit and more deck space for the five-person crew who are usually required to race this boat to its full potential.

Recently I had the opportunity to "test race" one of the first 770s during a Saturday afternoon winter race on Pittwater, NSW. This was in fact one of two original boats fully imported before New Yachts started production in Melbourne. With due respect to the Kiwis this boat wasn't exactly flash in terms of its finish, yet certainly showed the potential of the design in terms of both speed, ease of handling and attractive look on the water.

We ended up second overall in a scratch start race, not bad at all given the winner was one of the wing-powered Boatspeed 23s and some of our competitors included three Magic 25s and two International 11 metres. Admittedly the light winds favoured our boat and the race results might have been a different story if the winds were strong enough for the Magic 25s to use their trapeze - but, hey, it was still fun to be able to be up in this sort of company.

Design

The design shares a lot of similarities to the Elliott 7, namely a relatively low-sided, skiff-style yacht with relatively flat rocker line and Elliott's trademark "full section" bows.

The boat develops maximum beam amidships of 2.65 metres, but really is a much slimmer boat through the water because of a narrow waterline beam.

The topside's have the outward flare which is a feature of Greg Elliott's designs and which gives the boat tremendous reserve buoyancy when it's sailing in stronger winds. The rig is also pure Elliott - big, heavy roached mainsail and fairly tall (seventh-eight) foretriangle and short footed headsails.

In fact the rig is not overly high for the size of the boat with an I measurement in the foretriangle of 9.2 m and P (mainsail luff) of 9.6 m. This indicates a rig which is relatively compact, yet powerful thanks to the fully battened mainsail.

The 770 also features a retractable bow pole plus an asymmetric spinnaker of approximately 65.5 sq m. The latter is set from a turtle bag mounted in the cockpit hatchway.

Underwater foils consist of a very slim dagger keel with torpedo bulb on the bottom, and a dagger-style rudder blade both made in moulded fibreglass. A split keel moulding enables the builders to fit the lead ballast inside the keel and maintain a very smooth finish to the torpedo.

The hull and deck are also female moulded and feature a quality, medium tech layup of Triax stitched Zero 90 cloth, laid either side of foam cores which vary from 12-20 mm. Glass laminates are doubled in major stress areas such as the centreline and around the centrecase. Yes, the boat is built to be strong and isn't a throw-away race machine.

The approach to the deck gear is also very practical with a strong mast section, supported by a single set of spreaders/cap stays and no backstay or runners.

Sail controls are also kept to the basic requirements and about the only luxury are two, twin-speed Lewmars up on the cabin to look after the halyards, centreboard lift and headsail sheets.

There're few sail controls beyond this point except for the vang, mainsheet traveller in the cockpit and mainsail luff Cunningham. The idea is to keep the boat simple and easy to sail and therefore more fun for crew and skipper.

Class rules not only specify the limit of gear on deck, but also the mast section, rig layout and sail dimensions. In other words,

from the very outset this will be a true one-design boat and owners will be able to look forward to a future of class racing when there are more boats on the water.

Accommodation

On deck the day-sailer crew are very well accommodated by the spacious cockpit and roomy side decks. The deck layout enables the crew to move from side to side fairly easily, though there is a cabin structure forward.

The cockpit opens to the stern and whilst the test boat shows a recess well for the motor, future boats will simply have the motor mounted on a transom bracket. The current system has the motor getting in the way of the rudder.

The interior offers a basic cabin with long side settee berths which stretch aft to form quarter berths. There is a galley unit to port and starboard which has draws and an optional sink/water tank if owners want to stay overnight. A bulkhead divides the cabin area so there is a separate forecabin with two vee berths which can be filled in to form one large double berth. There is room here to fit the optional Porta Potti chemical WC.

The long settee berths could sleep up to two people each side, if you needed to sleep the crew aboard on an overnight race like the Marlay Point. The test boat didn't have backrests, but the current Aussie model will have both backrests as well as a few other concessions to comfort.

There is quite reasonable sitting headroom in the cabin and overall you could say the boat has the potential for family/overnight cruising even if doesn't offer a huge amount of room below.

Performance

We raced on a fairly light wind day, yet the boat was surprisingly quick and responsive in these conditions. To give you

some idea of how quick, we started a good ten minutes behind boats like NS 38s and a custom-rigged Farr 1104 and hauled them back like they were standing still. We went through about 20 boats to lead the fleet after the first mark, but when the Boatspeed and a Magic carried the wind to us on the downhill spinnaker tack, we

had to fight to get back into second spot.

It was fun to race in a boat which keeps moving in the lightest of winds and which is so easy to tack. We sailed four-up on the day which meant everyone had something to do, yet still had time to hold a tinnie when we decided it was time for a drink.

**THESE NEW BREEDS
ARE UNASHAMEDLY RACE
BOATS FIRST AND
FOREMOST, THE BOAT IS
BUILT TO BE STRONG AND
ISN'T A THROW-AWAY
RACE MACHINE**

The limited sail controls meant we could concentrate our thoughts on tactics, and also pay attention to basic sail trimming. In this regard I was particularly impressed with the asymmetric spinnaker/bow pole. It works easily and quickly and encourages you to "go for a kite" in situations where you probably wouldn't have bothered with a conventional spinnaker. Cutting out the hassle of a pole and various rope controls also means you can leave the spinnaker drop to very late at the mark - and there's no worry about the jib getting tangled up with the spinnaker pole!

The only real drawback of this type of spinnaker is you definitely cover more ground in light airs. You're forced to take big tacks downwind while others go more square to the mark. This is a little frustrating at first, but you soon realise that you end up at the bottom mark either the same, or in a better position.

We also suffered a few problems with the mainsail battens tending to not "pop" through after a tack, but realised afterwards that all they needed was the tension eased off.

The short footed number one headsail worked well and should cover most conditions. There is also an even shorter footed number two headsail in the standard class wardrobe which will cover fresher winds.

All sails supplied by the retailer, Sailing Scene, are made by Performance Sails (Victoria).

Summary

Overall the Elliott 770 should satisfy the sailor looking for a performance trailer yacht he/she can sail in normal TYA events, yet also compete well against the more radical new breed of performance one-designs.

The provision of below deck accommodation means the boat is not quite as limited in its use as some other go-fast boats yet, at the same time, it is recognising the fact that most racing sailors do little or no cruising.

While the sail/trail away price can be as high as \$50,200 with factory fitted options, it's possible to keep the price down to the \$45,000 mark by doing some of the fit-out yourself. What we're talking about here is fitting things like the deck fittings and putting in your own cushions and floor carpet. In many instances this sort of work could be done in a few weekends and wouldn't be a burden to a keen, hands-on racing sailor and his crew/mates.

Kerli Corlett says he hopes to have the Elliott 770 up and running as their own class next year. Ironically the test boat *Seven Seventy* was the starter's boat at this year's Elliott National titles. I sat aboard her as the little Elliotts did their thing in three back-to-back races at Lake Macquarie.

Then I sat and watched as Traks Gordon and his young crew jumped in the same boat and, with virtually no preparation, won the

NSW State Trailer Yacht Association over the next day and a half.

The Elliott 770 certainly seems to have speed to burn, especially upwind where it seems to have a special forte. It is none the less a fast and fun boat downwind in fresh to strong winds and should provide loads of excitement to crew in these conditions.

In summary, it would seem the 770 is yet another tribute to the skills of the kiwi designer across the Tasman we call Greg Elliott. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

Type	High Performance TS
Construction	GRP/foam
LOA	7.7 m
Beam	2.5 m
Draft	55 cm - 1.6 m
Displ	820 kg
Ballast	360 kg
Mainsail	27.3 sq m
Headsail	14.3 sq m
Spinnaker	65.5 sq m

Distributor/Sales enquires: Kerli Corlett's Sailing Scene; (02) 9979 6546, fax (02) 9979 6548.