

Elliott 5.9 stuns the t/y stars

Story and photos by Shane Kelly

The Elliott 5.9 made a stunning debut at the trailer yacht championships. It competed — *Mod* in the open division and *Zoot Allures* in the D division. Between them they took all the handicap honours in D, all the guns in E and came 29th in the open class. The first boat was put in the water only weeks before the series and *Zoot Allures* was still unfinished an hour before the first race. The 5.9 was designed by 26-year-old Auckland boatbuilder Greg Elliott, who has another design to his credit, the 7.92m keeler *Outsider*, which has taken 40 in three years of racing.

The trailer sailer is 5.9m (19ft 4in) long with a beam of 2.45m (8ft). It draws 1.3m (4ft 2in) with 204kg (449lb) of lead ballast hung in a bulb at the bottom of the daggerboard.

The hull is plywood, two skins of 3mm over 20mm square stringers with kahikatea bulkheads and girders to spread loadings from stress points through the hull. The mast is stepped on a star-shaped arrangement of girders and bunk fronts.

Elliott has designed the rig to be as simple as possible, with capshrouds, lowers and a forestay to hold up the fractional spar. Doing away with the backstay has enabled him to use a main with plenty of roach for



Greg Elliott.

other boat around this size which will sail fast, but at the same time it had to be safe and able to be sailed by anyone."

For this performance the Elliott 5.9 was promptly labelled "rule-cheater" and described as little more than a dinghy with a deck on.

The boat is neither. It was conceived as a day-sailer which would allow people to spend a night or two on board. Above all else it was designed to provide fast, fun sailing for young people whose budgets were limited.

The hull uses the maximum beam available to a trailer yacht for buoyancy and ability to carry sail. Elliott used the keel with a bulb of lead on his *Outsider* design and considered it good for the trailer yacht. The leverage provides good stability and when the board is up the bulb remains below the bottom of the hull to provide a righting moment.

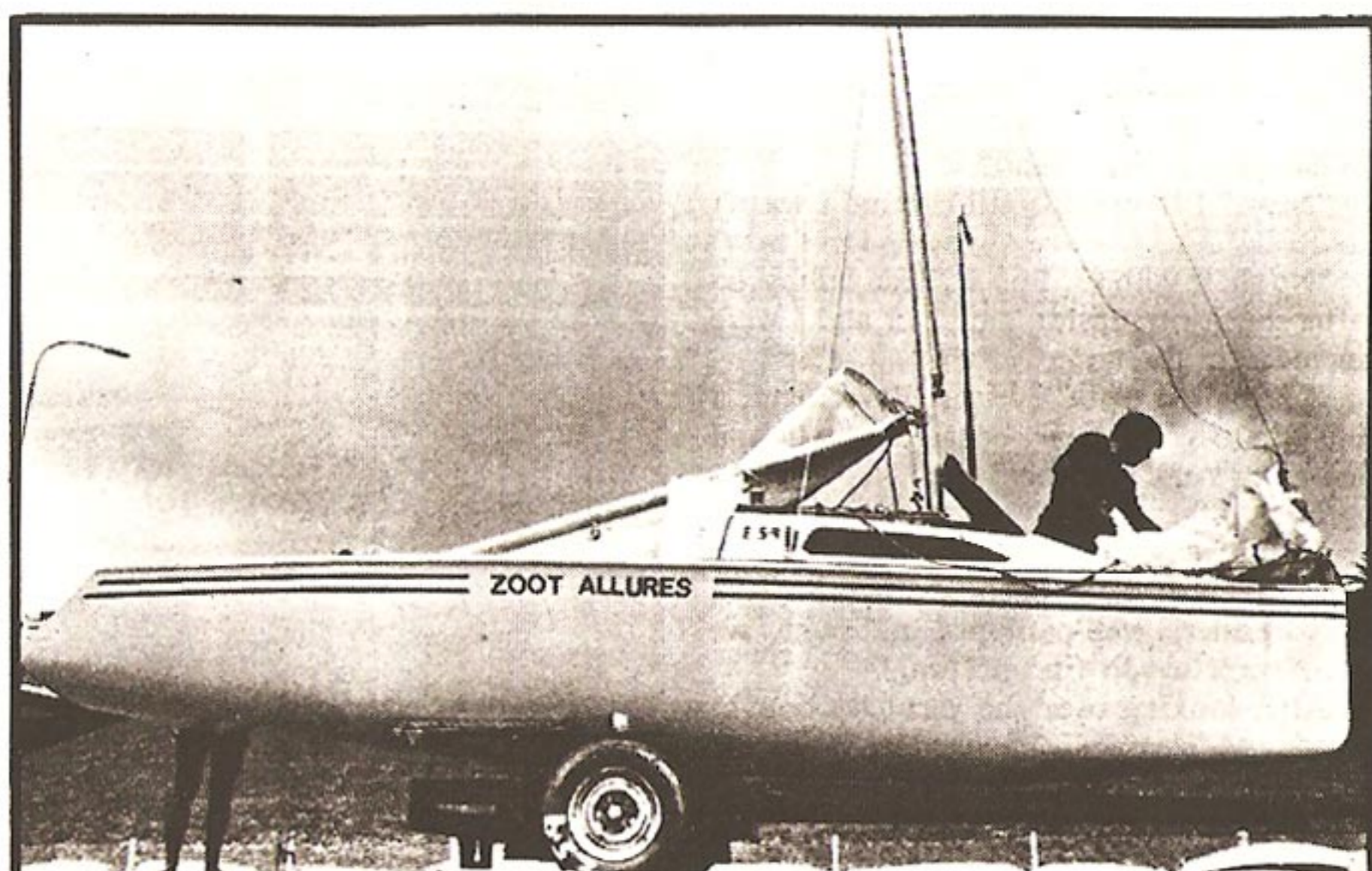
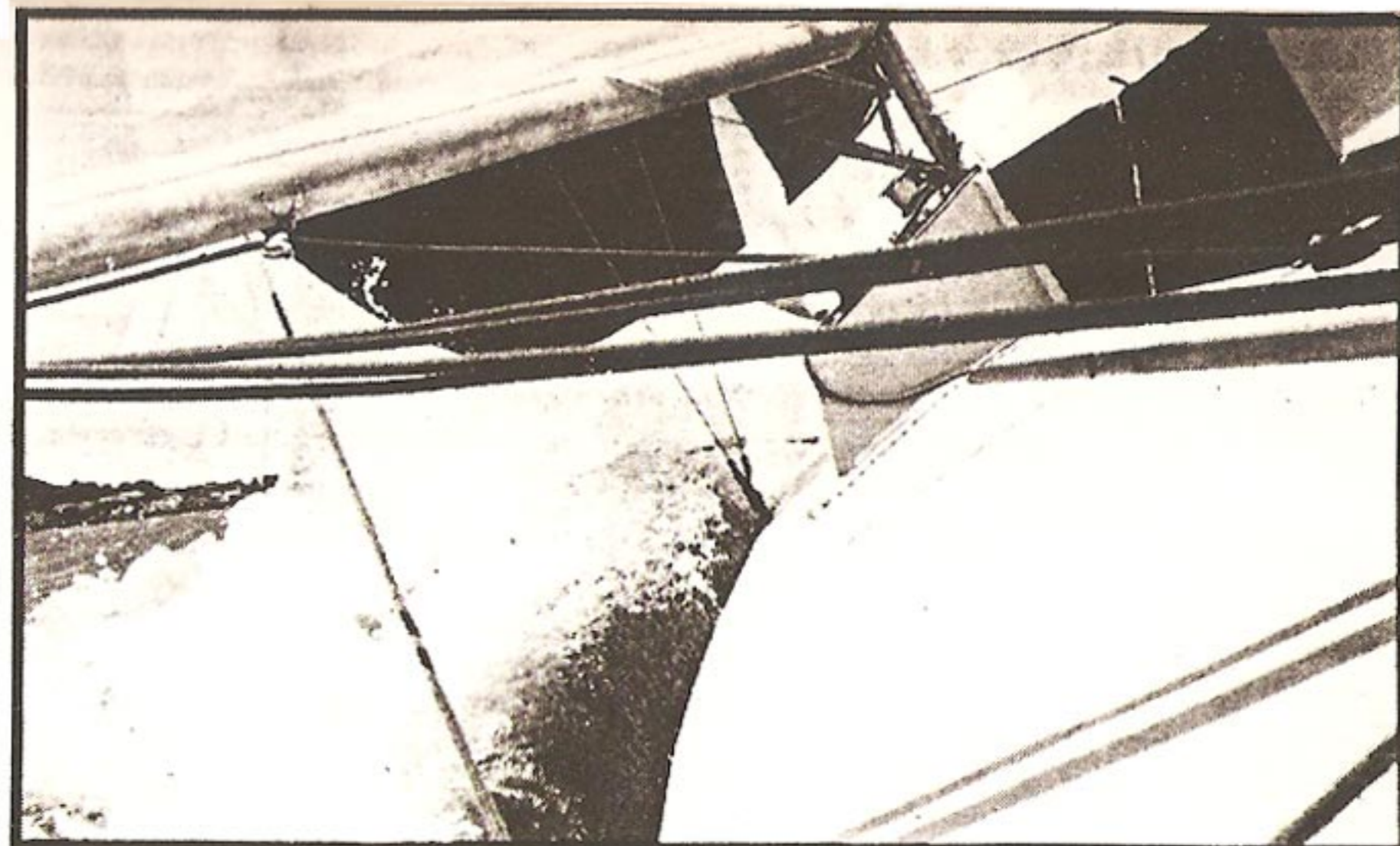
"With the board down you will not tip the 5.9 over," he says.

Though the 5.9 earned the title of oversized dinghy at the championships, this is not strictly true. Elliott describes the boat as semi-displacement with ideas borrowed from keelboat and dinghy designs.

The forward sections are hard U-shapes. The hull has a lot of rocker to improve upwind speed while the aft sections are smooth with firm quarters for downwind sailing. When running, the crew move as far aft as possible to get the bow clear of the water.

"I've told the guys to keep the forefoot out when running," says Greg.

The marriage between hull shape stability and ballast stability is important. The hull can provide stability when running and



Top: Hull shape is designed to give maximum stability — here, the beam and flared topsides provide buoyancy under spinnaker. Above: Hard U-shaped forward sections, plenty of rocker and firm quarters give stability and speed upwind and downwind. *Zoot Allures* name comes from a Frank Zappa LP



increased sail area. Though it was initially drawn for racing in the restricted class — which bans spinnakers — these have been added on some boats.

There is accommodation for four people in two quarter berths under the cockpit and a double V-berth in the bow.

The boat was drawn with sailing performance foremost and the plan is to campaign the 5.9s in trailer sailer races, particularly Ponsonby Cruising Club's evening series.

Cost largely dictated the overall length; the only way to cut the cost, says Greg, was to cut down the overall length. "There is no

Below: *Zoot Allures*' owner, Brett Reed, trims the spinnaker while Allan Kennedy steers and Greg Elliott watches the flat wake disappear as the 5.9 planes.



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reaching but when going to windward the ballast must add more.

It was on the windward legs that the 5.9s took the most time out of the competition in the trailer yacht championships.

"Everyone was fast downwind," says Greg. "In the first race, *Mod* was sailed by someone who had never sailed or raced before — and was third around the windward mark ahead of Olympic yachtsmen.

"In some races *Brzo* would pass the Farr 6000s on the first beat even though they started five minutes ahead of her."

Up to race three the Elliott 5.9s had proved they went well in the light, so other competitors began asking what would happen when it blew hard.

When it did blow later in the week, "we went out and killed them," says Greg.

A home-built 5.9 would cost around \$7000, but Elliott stresses that the construction is not simple and the amateur would need some prior knowledge of building. A professionally-built version would cost between \$10,000 and \$12,000.

With the change in the divisional sizes for trailer yachts, the Elliott 5.9 will have to compete in the 5.5m to 6.5m class, though Greg believes the boat will still be competitive.

"It's not going to be long before we have our own class," he says. "I've put a lot of time into this boat and the others are going to find it hard to beat us."

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