

# 29erXX



A 29er on steroids? That's what the new twin-wire XX version promises, with serious skiff power and a big grin factor. **Jeremy Evans** went to check it out...

**S**ince it first appeared in 1997, the 29er has been considered a feisty boat. A smaller sister to the 49er, it requires the same skiff-style skills, and packs a load of power.

The 29er is unquestionably a boat for lightweight crews, with a recommended range of 105-140kg divided between a very light driver and heavier, taller crew providing all necessary leverage on the wire. The 29er is also a scramble-

and-action boat which tends to attract young, nimble sailors. Think of monkeys swinging around in a zoo and you've got the picture! Skiff sailors need to be agile and move fast – you don't just sit there and enjoy the ride.

The 29er shares the role of ISAF twin-crew youth dinghy with the 420 and has been selected as the world championship boat for 2007 and 2008. Combined with the power of the RYA youth ►

Y&Y  
TEST



**Right** The new sail plan requires a 49er-style carbon mast with twin spreaders to control approximately six square metres more sail area.



programme, all these factors have conspired to turn the 29er into a teenagers' boat with an average crew age of not much more than 16 years. This is very much a UK phenomenon – last year's 29er world champions are 'grown-ups' with a combined age of 50-plus – but it means that class events in Britain are, for better or worse, chock-full with teenagers.

That can put off older sailors who enjoy sailing the boat, as well as those who have been in the class for a few years and find they no longer relate to the rest of the crews. Gemma McIntyre and Mari Shepherd are typical – highly seasoned in the 29er and other regatta classes, the girls are mid-way through university and were looking for a new challenge. Enter the 29erXX which is designer

Julian Bethwaite's new plan. First, the boat will give mature 29er sailors somewhere to go. And second, it creates a low-cost rocket for skiff enthusiasts who don't want to go full bore on a 49er which is too expensive and impractical for most club racers. Last, but by no means least, it also provides a potential new women's Olympic class.

### Rig development

With the 29er platform fully sorted, Julian Bethwaite and sailmaker Ian MacDairmid set to work creating a new rig which would transform the 29er into a different kind of boat. Initial testing was done in Australia, after which Ovington and Ian Bruce – 9er builders in the UK and Canada – trialled prototypes which were also sailed by top sailors at last year's 29er European and world championships.

The only major change from Julian Bethwaite's original concept was a downsized spinnaker from an absolute monster to far-from-small masthead kite you see in the photos. What you get is a complete rig system which fits on a standard 29er and gives you two boats in one. The new masthead spinnaker requires a 49er-style carbon mast with twin spreaders to keep everything under control – it's only 18 inches longer than the standard 29er stick, but carries approximately six square metres more sail shared between kite, main and jib (all produced by Neil Pryde). The rig

**Below** The XX features the same hull as the 29er, requiring agile and relatively light crew.

**Below right** It's important to master getting weight back with the helm in the toe straps.







Getting weight back and holding it back is an important part of the solution. Gemma did not like the feel of being stuck in footstraps when driving, but admitted it beats stumbling around the boat (more like flying) and after a time they probably seem like second nature. She also pointed out that because the 29er is a small boat, there isn't much room for everyone at the back!

## The verdict

Gemma and Mari agreed that the 29erXX would be a perfect girls' boat – a great choice at either end of the scale for club sailing or the Olympics. But girls must not be allowed to steal all the fun! Slim boys should rise to the XX challenge which is absolute for those who adore speed. Don't assume the XX is just about squirt-and-go racing. The protectionist argument in favour of keeping the old classes going is that they may be slow but they're 'tactical'. So is a one-design fleet of skiffs. Not only upwind, but downhill when calling the right gybes is a massive factor in winning. ■

**Above** The 29erXX proved very responsive and manoeuvrable through the turns.

## ANSWER BACK

from Dave Hall

I'm not sure Jeremy and the girls have left me anything to say. The 29erXX is everything and does everything it is designed to do.

Sails and masts will be available mid-March for those who wish to either buy a complete boat or turbo-charge the one they already have.

There is a huge demand for rigs around the world and it is hoped that we will be able to hold a training/trial event in Spain this summer, followed by the first International Regatta either alongside or after the 29er worlds in Weymouth.

I would like to say thank you to Jeremy, Mari and Gemma for their time and the weather for eventually allowing us to sail and take the photographs.

Thanks to Hayling Island Sailing Club for providing facilities for this test. For more information visit [www.hisc.co.uk](http://www.hisc.co.uk)

## 29erXX specifications

DESIGN:	Julian Bethwaite in 2005		
LENGTH:	4.45m		
BEAM:	1.77m		
HULL WEIGHT:	(fully fitted) 70kg		
SAIL AREA:	MAIN & JIB	15sq m	
	ASYMMETRIC	19sq m	
TARGET PN:	820		

**PRICE:** £7,095

**CONTACT:** Ovington Boats  
Tanners Bank  
Tynemouth  
North Shields  
NE30 1JH

**TEL:** 07071 29 39 49  
**EMAIL:** [niners@ovingtonboats.co.uk](mailto:niners@ovingtonboats.co.uk)  
**WEBSITE:** [www.ovingtonboats.com](http://www.ovingtonboats.com)

## COMPARISONS...

Where does the 29erXX fit in? Here are some alternatives...



### 29er

Dominated by youth sailors, but it's a great boat for lightweight adults with attitude and expertise. Also the perfect trainer for the XX version.

LOA:	4.4m
BEAM:	1.7m
HULL WEIGHT:	70kg
SAIL AREA:	
Upwind	12sq m
Spinnaker	16sq m
CURRENT PN:	924
GUIDE PRICE:	£5,895*



### RS800

Phil Morrison 1998 design provides blistering performance for a recommended crew weight range of 127-160kg with racks to provide equalisation.

LOA:	4.8m
BEAM:	1.88-2.89m
HULL WEIGHT:	62kg
SAIL AREA:	
Upwind	16.5sq m
Spinnaker	21sq m
CURRENT PN:	825
GUIDE PRICE:	£8,995*



### Cherub

Do you want to stand out from the crowd? The Cherub provides an extreme twin-wire solution with a monumental kite.

LOA:	3.7m
BEAM:	1.8m
HULL WEIGHT:	50kg
SAIL AREA:	
Upwind	15.5sq m
Spinnaker	21sq m
CURRENT PN:	975
GUIDE PRICE:	£12,000*