

40 Years of SKATES at East Fremantle Yacht Club

2010 - 11 Season by Allan Spencer

Most of the Skate sailors would now be aware that it is our 40th year of competitive Skate sailing at EFYC, with the class originally allowed into the club during the 1970-71 year when Wally Hopper bought 4 old wooden boats to establish the skate fleet. Wally sailed with past Commodore Mark Purser on Tracey II. Wally also holds the 'distinguished' record of floating an EH Holden Van in the pens at EFYC. He parked inside the club's property half way down the hill and had just sat down at the bar when somebody said there was a car in the pens. Sure enough it was his, it had jumped out of gear, rolled down the hill, turned the corner and into the water without touching a car or a boat. In those days the club used to have an outdoor picture theatre on site with the big screen on the hill at the bottom of Petra St, the projection room used to be near where the new canteen sits today, I can remember watching a couple of movies there as a youngster.

The inaugural Club Champion in 71-72 was none other than Steve "Ducky" Payne sailing with Roger Goode on Sticky Fingers, we had a number of personalities throughout this era, the Stead brothers Greg & Paul, Stephen & Raymond Hudson, Dave Walker (our early rescue boat provider), Lyndsay Roy, Doug Allen, Dick Caesar, Peter Burtenshaw and John "Wally" Pickles, Barry Hooper & Bill Ellis, there was George Sloan sailing with Dave Edwards and later yours truly. Alan "Eggy" Edwards was around too with Greg Coombes, Warren & Wayne Hudson sailed together then Mick "Tool" Spencer decided to have a crack with Wazza, Paul Shiner & Barry Froome were there in the early days along with Pete Fannon & a young Brett Fannon and in the late 70's we saw the emergence of another group of young guys come into the skate class from South Fremantle High School sailing program introduced by Past Commodore Trevor Higgs. Some notable reprobates included Silvio Fico, Mick Minutillo, Chris "Pommy" Toleman, Guiseppe "Meatballs" Minnisale, Lukey Jenkins and I think even Mark Tate was introduced around this time.

We managed to entice a couple of Kitty Cat sailors into the class when Craig Fletcher decided to try his hand at Skate sailing along with Paul Vos. Unfortunately Vossy moved on and was replaced by Mark "Weazel" Loader on board with Felch. We maintained our numbers well throughout this period and had Bruce Spencer join us in the early 80's, I can remember Bruce as a sprightly 16 year old at the first Ceduna titles being struck down before the series started with a serious bout of twisted nuts, after a short stint in the local hospital, he remarkably sailed the series with a lot of padding around the knacker bag. I think this was also about the time that a young Louis Suriano team up with Brett Fannon, who can forget the wet toiletry bag incident at Brighton & Seacliff, sorry guys it just sprung to mind.

Out of the 125's came Danny O'Byrne & Gary Swan along with Brad O'Byrne & Joel Mathews for guest appearances. Adam Smith & Rhys Jones were the winners of the match racing series that allowed them the sail the brand new association boat. I can remember introducing Andrew "Snodge" Taylor into the class, he in turn teamed up with Steve Hall for a few years.

Speaking of ex-legends we can't forget Colin "Colly" Hall and Ray "Oby" O'Byrne and Mark "Percy" Purser all Past Club Commodores of EFYC who have been tremendous supporters of the Skate class over a number of years.

When it comes to the actually sailing achievements the Grand Masters of the EFYC Skate Class would have to be Stephen & Ray Hudson who together have won an amazing 15 Club Championships. Next in line for honours is Brett Fannon who with a trio of crews has won 9 Club Championships (crews Tom Fico 6, Steve Hall 1, Cameron Fannon 2). Another guy who has been a ferocious competitor is Silvio Fico who with Mick Minutillo has won 6 Club Championships. Needless to say all the guys are still sailing Skates competitively in the 2010 -11 season. The complete list of club champions has been listed on the Australian Skate National Website for all to view, to win one it is an achievement, to win as many as the guys mentioned above it is Legendary stuff.

EFYC boasts a number of WA Skate Association Life Members, with Bill Sloan & Don Hudson our first recipients for devotion to rescue boat services for the association over many consecutive years, Stephen & Ray Hudson also were rewarded along with recent recipient George Sloan for their many years of service & sailing commitment.

Allan "Spanner" Spencer was awarded National Association Life membership in 2000 at the St George Titles that year which is an honour that is thoroughly cherished.

The club has also celebrated two Australian Champions being Danny O'Byrne with Gary Swan on Atomic Rat at the Bunbury Titles in 1998 – 99 and also Brett Fannon & Tom Fico on Tasty Fish at the EFYC Titles in 2001 – 02. Australian Junior championships were won by Bruce & Allan Spencer, Andrew Tailor & Steve Hall, Kurt Johnson & Spanner and Matt Ferris & Phillip Shiner. I think we have also had a couple of veteran's winning that award. If I have missed anyone's achievements let me know and I will update this document, specifically the State Championships as I don't have these records at my finger tips, but I'm pretty sure Steve & Ray won it, Brett & Silvio have also been there. Danny & Gary also. Fletch must have got close if not winning it, George got close & so did Bruce and also my mate Shirl almost stole it last year. I also know that a number of Junior State Champions have come from EFYC.

We will also celebrate this terrific 40th season milestone by staging the 2010-11 Skate National Championships at EFYC over the Xmas – New Year period and I'm sure that former sailors will catch up for a chat & a drink at this event. It promises to be another great title of racing in fantastic water especially down the "Drainpipe", only joking, we have courses set for the open water and only have to sail the drainpipe to & from the course. The off water activities will keep all occupied and I'm sure it will be great fun.

I hope all have enjoyed this bit of reminiscing about 40 years of Skates at EFYC.