

CHAMPIONSHIP SKIPPERS

JEFFKINS EVERGREEN SKATE MAN

Lake Macquarie's remarkable Doug Jeffkins has been sailing VJs and Skates for 31 years and he's still winning the big ones. He designed the bigger Skate now being built in fibreglass.

By ROSS TELFER



AUSTRALIAN SKATE CHAMPION, Doug Jeffkins, who has been in the class since its inception — and was sailing for about 20 years before the Skate came along! — lives two blocks from the waterfront at Warners Bay, a shallow section of Lake Macquarie's north-west corner. His is a typical boatbuilder's house... the car is never in the garage because that's where the boats are!

Every time I've been there there has been a heap of aromatic oregon or meranti shavings in one corner of the garage, a leaning plank in a sash cramp, dusty spars swinging from the rafters, and the tang of fibreglass resin in the air. A scene to make every handyman sailor's heart beat quicker.

Doug and his family lived previously at Newcastle, where Doug spent 13 years learning all about tidal sailing on Port Hunter, where the Hunter River flows

Another glass "bigger Skate" comes out of the mould. Jeffkins was commissioned to redesign the Skate in 1969. Alan and Gary Dyson and John Lucas give a hand. These shells weigh just 54 lb.

through Newcastle Harbor out to Nobbys. He moved to Warners Bay in 1954 and immediately began showing the local lads how to sail.

He has been in the sailing game since 1941, when, as a 14-year-old, he crewed aboard Doug Middleby's VJ, Dawn, at Speers Point. The Jays held him captive for the next nine years when he began sailing a 16 ft Skiff on Saturdays (and a Jay on Sundays!)

The Jeffkins name began to appear in the big time lists when, at Port Hunter, he teamed up with Eric Pitt, who was to crew for him on a number of champion VJs. First there was State champion Trade Winds, which held the Port Hunter Club championship for four years, then DNE (Doug'n Eric) which held the title for another four years and performed consistently to take major placings in the big regattas without actually gaining a championship.

DNE was the first of the weight-breaker VJs. She weighed in at only 68 lb at launching, having very few frames. She shocked the old stagers. With a grin, Doug explained that the weight limit on

Doug Jeffkins — still sailing ultimate planing machines at 45.

VJs was imposed soon afterwards, but hastened to add that the hull was sound and, as the record shows, was still winning championships four seasons later.

The grin persisted as he remembered how he'd been able to sail without a deadwood skeg until officialdom caught up. The relative isolation of Port Hunter permitted quite a bit of experimentation!

He has done well in skiffs, too, having skippered the first of the plywood hard chiners, Horrie Deveraux' Wattle, and also winning two Port Hunter championships in Windrush.

Doug spent the first season at Lake Macquarie sailing with Bob Williams at Marmong Point SC. Bob was a newcomer to Jays and was to become a top Lake VJ and Skate sailor.

The next season Doug built his own VJ and Eric Pitt travelled down from Newcastle to crew. Named Jo (after his daughter Joanne) this boat won the club championship and the Lake Macquarie title. (Continued on page 75)

JEFFKINS — EVERGREEN SKATE MAN

(Continued from page 25)

One of Doug's most treasured VJ victories was aboard the rebuilt multi champion Argyle — a real veteran. A subsequent Australian champion Skate skipper, Ben Piefke (Bitsa) had bought Argyle from Tom Adamson, so Doug re-built it and sailed it for him. He cherishes the memory of the 1959 Manning River Championship, when he beat Trevor Beardsmore (Minx) and Ron Hann (Jern) in a very close finish.

In 1960 we first saw Skates on Lake Macquarie when the Wilson brothers of Cronulla brought their "Bigger VS" to Teralba. That was it. A number of us attended a meeting where plans and photos were eagerly perused. We talked — Doug Jeffkins acted. He built a Skate for himself and another for Ken Mitchell (Satschmo). This Skate, Jo, was crewed by Graham Burgess and won the club championship from the pioneer Skaters — the Epps brothers, of Kurri, Rex Wharton, of Newcastle, and Mitchell.

The innovations started with Doug's 1961-62 Skate, Voodoo. It featured maximum spring at stem and transom and a full-length rolled edge cockpit. The next season it was "Ace", a similar hull with finer lines, then came "Lulu" in 1965, a smaller boat again.

Probably the most significant season was that of 1965-66 when Jeffkins did not sail. He watched . . . and thought. Skates were undoubtedly exciting and speedy craft, but at the peak of planing bursts they would nose into the waves they were racing over, submarining and slewing wildly as fine stems sliced deep. Jeffkins saw additional buoyancy in the stem as the answer. These were not intended, he reasoned, to pare their way through waves, they were meant to ride like a scow. A big wave in the snout will stop any boat — why not go for a bluff-nosed scow?

In 1966-67 came the undoubtedly ugly Totem the first of the new breed which was to revolutionise Skating. It won the club championship, the Concord-Ryde Championship and the lake Championship. Doug regards Totem as one of the fastest Skates he has built. And that includes the current champion. Doug had also introduced extended leaning planks at this stage and Totem was able to carry them far better than smaller hulls. In 1968-69, Doug built a famous duo, Fury (to become Australian champion) and Bitsa (Ben Piefke — numerous championships including State and Australian).

"They laughed like hell when they saw these two boats. 'Boxes' and 'coffins' they called them. We belted the tripe out of them. They stopped laughing." (Bitsa is now raced as Mia Terie by Steve Bull and is the current Australian Junior Champion!)

Fury S, the next of the Jeffkins' boats, reverted more to the conventional as it had finer stem lines with more vee than the box-scows of the previous year. It was club champion but achieved only championship placings.

Jeffkins' ability was recognised in 1969 when the NSW Skate Association commissioned him to design and build a bigger Skate. The prototype was built to extremes quite deliberately, to provide a basis for subsequent modification. It was beamier and flatter in spring than the present fibreglass mould. "A very comfortable boat" was Doug's judgment.

In 1970 the glass Jo Blo appeared. She represents a decade of evolution of Skate design and is a synthesis of parochial views. Victorians, Westralians and New South Welshmen had their say, but the design is predominantly Jeffkins'. The boat remains big amidships and under the mast but fines off at the stem.

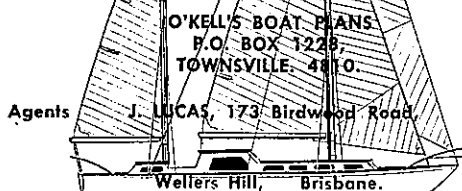
Jo Blo won the Speer's Point Club Championship, the Brisbane Water Championship, the Botany Bay Championship, and both State and Australian

SEACRAFT, October, 1971 75

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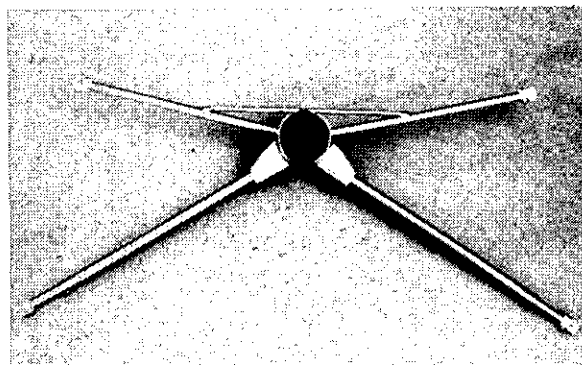
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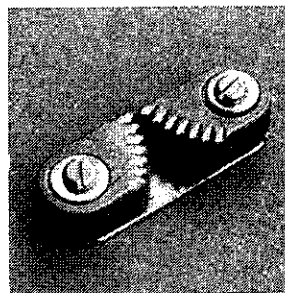
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Championships. Paul Jeffkins, himself a promising helmsman, crewed for his father in these victories.

The fibreglass hull, for which John Lucas of Kotara provided the technical knowledge and skills, weighs only 54 pounds in shell form. It has a gel coat, a layer of 3/4 oz cloth, then a layer of 2 oz cloth plus reinforcing strips of 3/4 oz along the keel and chines. It is available in shell or completed form.

HOW TO SAIL FASTER

Jeffkins used locally made McKellar sails, produced from the Lake Macquarie loft of Wal Turnbull, and he believes there is little point in specifying special cuts of sails.

"If the sailmaker provides quality sails on which he has used his knowledge, you can't do better." He believes Skate sailors should use their own observation and "commonsense" in setting sails. He points out that there is very little variation in positioning halyard block height on the mast, or jib lead position. Fine tuning can be done with centreboard, he argues.

Doug suggests that future Skate owners need not bother having the long tracks to accommodate the slides used to secure shrouds to the gunwales. The solution is a small bracket which will do the job. He has experimented with both a 11 lb Chivers' tapered alloy mast and a uniform section of alloy (which he bought in a long length and cut to make both mast and boom). He feels that the latter is the most economical way to get afloat.

A neat fitting which he has developed is the alloy rudder stock/tiller section. Constructed from 2 in. x 1/4 in. alloy, the tiller is bent around to form the stock, and is slotted to take the dagger rudder blade. (See photo).

The rectangular rudder blade is probably not as efficient as a shaped profile, but the uniformity enables the blade to be lifted while remaining firm in the shaped slots, and also provides a firm "bite" with

the section left in the water. The worst that can happen with underwater gear is a twisting under stress.

The centreboard must remain aligned to the boat's axis. For this reason Doug's dagger board is very rigid, almost heavy, in construction. This is the source of Doug's tuning. He prefers chunky fins which are narrow but thick. He tends to lay his board aft permanently, the top of the centreboard being shaped accordingly.

Doug has plenty of faith in the all-round brace and tailropes spinnaker system and feels that it cannot be improved upon as a basic technique.

SAILING TECHNIQUES

A feature of his sailing technique is his ability to claw upwind, especially in light to moderate breezes where he seems to be able consistently point higher than his opponents. He points out that his crew weight best suited those breezes (last season Doug was 10 stone and Paul was nine). But it is mainly just experience. He doesn't like to sit his crew to leeward, but keeps a clear view of his jib luff.

"Sails and feel are the two guides."

When told to watch the water for data to assist sailing technique, too many skippers concentrate on the water immediately around their boat. You have to look well ahead and to windward, Doug advises. But it is the "feel" of the boat, its response to sails and tiller, that enables you to get upwind as far as possible without stalling or pinching.

Probably one of the most fruitful pieces of advice on sailing technique was Doug's view on downwind sailing. He believes in keeping a clear breeze, but whenever clear ahead of the fleet with one or two rivals nearby he will always tend to steer a leeward course. He works on the principle of creeping downwind to leeward as far as he can, intent on maintaining the same speed as his rivals while falling

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to leeward. This gives a reserve of increased speed which can be used at the end of the run by shying off to the mark. It is vital that one watch the fleet, though, to avoid being trapped or blanketed.

The ideal Skate crew weight? Eleven stone each.

Doug feels that those who wish to become champions do not practise enough. Crew work is probably the most important factor in Skate success, and this is the one element that practice can improve enormously. He also warns that top sailing activity frequently involves three races in a single weekend. At that rate sails and gear depreciate quickly and need careful watching, and replacement if necessary.

Doug Jeffkins is again sailing Jo Blow this season — Jo Blo's second and Doug Jeffkins' 31st. Skating and Doug Jeffkins are synonymous. *

WHAT'S NEW FROM THE BIG 3

(Continued from page 59)

The new style five gallon tote tank is fitted with a fuel gauge and with its vertical stance can be stowed in smaller stowage spaces than can conventional types of tank.

A full range of extras can be had and prices for the range are \$230 for the 3.6 hp, \$380 for the 6 hp, \$465 for the 8 hp, \$545 for the 9.9 hp, \$600 for the 12.9 hp, \$695 for the 20, \$850 for the 35, \$910 for the 45, \$1095 for the 55, \$1330 for the 70, \$1425 for the 85 hp, \$1550 for the 105 and \$1660 for the 120 hp.

Outboard Marine Australia claim they sell more outboard motors than anybody else in the business.

They do this with great efforts in the small and medium motor bracket, but over the last two years they have been competing in the racing field once dominated by the Mercury range. The new OMC Stinger has created great interest with its racing and record runs and its win in a World Championship has made racing drivers sit up. Racing improves the breed and the buyer of motors for fishing gets the benefits of this racing research.

Smallest motor in the OMC range is the tiny two hp Seahorse. With integral re-wind starting and a 32 oz petrol tank, the Seahorse and its running mate, the Mate, is extremely portable.

OMC's Power Port Loop Charging is an ingeniously simplified scavenging idea for two-stroke engines. Other improvements for 1971 are "doughnut" rubber mounts on the smaller motors for quieter running, a redesigned recoil starter, hotter plugs for better low speed work and a new prop design to eliminate fishing line damage to gear box seals.

All OMC motors are "Lyfanited" for use in salt water and this alloy protection process is claimed to cut corrosion significantly.

Big plus of the OMC range for 1971 has been the very impressive 50 hp model. Available as the Evinrude Lark and the Seahorse 50, the motor is a medium size, high performance, economical unit. It is equally good for skiing or for offshore running. With an all up weight of 186 lb, the unit is reasonably portable, provides plenty of poke to whip a 15-footer with three aboard to 30 mph and needs only 2¾ gph at cruise speeds.

Prices for the OMC range are \$175 for the 2 hp, \$265 for the 4 hp, \$380 for the 6, \$545 for the 9½, \$695 for the 20, \$750 for the 25, \$895 for the 40, \$1170 for the 50, \$1350 for the 60, \$1585 for the V100 and \$1795 for the V125.

None of the big three in the outboard field has indicated anything new and startling for the next few years. They seem bent on improving and refining the economy and performance of the small to medium units, and increasing the power from a given displacement for the bigger motors. Way out types of units such as diesel, kerosene and Wankel motors are available, but there is too little general appeal as yet for these to feature in the range of the Big Three. *

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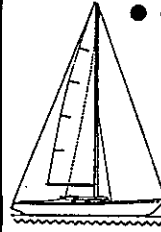
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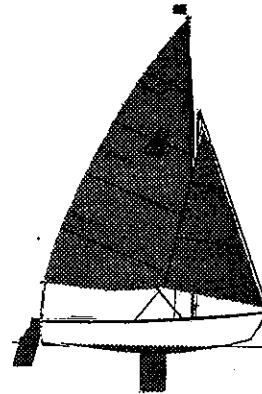
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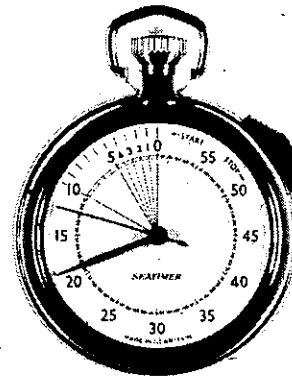
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Jeffkins and Dennis McEnearney sail Fury to victory in the 1967-68 Australian championship at Speers Point. Planing to windward is Jeffkins' forte. He does it better than anyone else, and points higher!

