

SKUD 18

Media Information

July 21, 2006

The SKUD18 is the result of collaboration between Chris Mitchell / Access Sailing and Julian Bethwaite / Bethwaite Design, both in Australia, along with Argentinean naval architect Martin Billoch.

By combining Mitchell's unique experience and ideology of 'sailing for everyone' with 20 years of Bethwaite research and technology, the result is an innovative 'lead assisted skiff' (LAS), the SKUD18.

Selected in 2005 as the boat for two-person Paralympic competition in Beijing, the SKUD18 is a strict one design class. Sailors are seated on the centerline for Paralympic events, but the boat can be sailed with or without either of the seats and configured to suit different sailors' needs. Perfect for training younger sailors before they move into high performance skiffs or dinghies, the SKUD18 is also ideal for those not-so-young sailors who cannot hike like they used to but still want the excitement of high performance racing.

Bethwaite, who also designed the Olympic class 49er skiff explained, "The design evolved to be a 5.8m LAS, capable of carrying weight whilst maintaining a high level of performance and control. The cost has been kept low and it provides easy stacking and containerisation, simple maintenance and general ease of use. The boat will be a challenge for able-bodied and disabled sailors alike. The SKUD18 has been designed from a performance basis to offer scintillating, crisp and snappy response to sailors regardless of their mobility."

Mitchell, designer of a range of accessible sailcraft continued, "The SKUD18 is very versatile and can be handled by a variety of crew configurations. The helmsperson can transfer manually and be steering with tillers, or be in a fixed seat on the centreline using a manual joystick, push/pull rods, or a servo assist joystick with full control of all functions. The forward crew can either be seated on the centreline, transferring manually, or on trapeze. As the name reflects, the SKUD18 is a SKiff of Universal Design and can be sailed for fun or serious competition by people of all levels of physical ability."

Whilst the SKUD 18 is very new, boats are already on the water in Canada, USA and Great Britain. Sailors in Sweden, Japan, China and Australia are eagerly awaiting delivery of their boats. With the expectation that fleet numbers will grow rapidly, a large number of events are also being arranged for the class. Proposed events currently include:

July 2006 - Lands End NOOD Regatta, Massachusetts, USA

August 2006 – US Sailing Paralympic Qualifier, Rhode Island, USA

August 2006 – Cork Week, Ontario, CAN

October 2006 – British & European Championship, Weymouth, UK

November – December 2006 – Americas Regatta, Florida, USA

January 2007 – Sail Melbourne International Regatta, Melbourne, Australia

January 2007 – Rolex Miami OCR, Florida, USA

It is expected that the SKUD 18 will very quickly become an ISAF Recognised Class, at least before the Beijing Paralympic Games, and is highly likely to achieve International Class status within only a few years.

The SKUD 18 is being built by Extreme Sailing Products in Batam, Indonesia for Bethwaite Design. Run by two Australian boatbuilder, Tim Ross and Paul Paterson, XSP also produce the 49er, 29er, Tasar, Byte, 420, Optimist and a number of other classes. XSP were selected for their consistent high standards of workmanship and their efficient distribution location via Singapore.

The first SKUD 18s were reserved for ISAF MNAs that intend to enter the 2 person Paralympic sailing competition in Beijing, however the boat will now become available internationally via the network of Bethwaite Design and Access Sailing agents and distributors.

Chris Mitchell has developed servo assist systems for all the Access classes including the SKUD 18.

“The purpose of servo systems is to allow the more severely disabled people to sail and to level up the playing field”, he says.

On sailing boats servo motors are generally used to allow people with mobility problems to enjoy the freedom and independence of sailing by themselves, sailing solo, something that many don't achieve in any other aspect of their lives. On two-person boats like the SKUD18, the helmsperson may be a severely disabled sailor (SDS) so needs servo assisted steering, while the crew would generally control the sheets. But it is achievable to have a full servo system so that the SDS helmsperson can adjust sheets and other controls like cunningham and outhaul as well.

Access Sailing Systems servo assist equipment can easily be converted for manual use by disengaging the steering winch clutch and winding out all but a few inches of sheet and then hauling in the sheets by hand. On the Liberty and SKUD18, the sheets are double ended and can be readily adjusted in either mode.

Additional media information is available from...

Access Sailing Systems Pty Ltd
2/7 Bungaleen Court
DANDENONG SOUTH VIC 3175
AUSTRALIA
Telephone: +61 3 9768 3101
Facsimile: +61 3 9768 3103
Mobile: +61 4 2851 4058
Email: info@accesssailing.com
Website: www.accessdinghy.org

Websites...

Access Sailing Systems – www.accessdinghy.org
Bethwaite Design – www.bethwaite.com
Class Website – www.skud18.org
IFDS - www.sailing.org/disabled