

Ovington 1

Beigesteuert von Dick Johnson

Dave Ovington, perhaps Britain's foremost high-tech dinghy builder, launched the prototype of the Ovington A, his first ever design, in front of an appreciative, knowledgeable 14 audience at the recent Itchenor Frostbite meeting over Guy Fawkes weekend.

The Ovington A, drawn to fit the new International 14 rules effective from January 1996, has the input of Dave's many years of experience in building to the Merlin Rocket, International 14, 18ft Skiff and many other designs, and his 20 or more years of experience in all these classes and others. Andrew Cuddihy, a Moth designer and Champion, champion of the wild Aussie 12 footer - 30ft masts, unlimited sail area, 13ft asymmetric poles setting 700 sq ft spinnakers - is an experienced skiff designer, engineer and sailmaker and comes to Ovington Boats from a stint at the America's Cup with Sid Fisher's team.

The design is reminiscent of the 18ft Skiff, with a shallow rocker, narrow entry flaring out into a full bow above the waterline for reserve buoyancy. The new shape bow is expected to initially cut through waves with low drag, lifting as the immersion increases. Careful attention has been paid to the heeled rocker lines, developing a shape that ensures controllability when hard pressed under the new, bigger spinnakers. Mathematical manipulation of the curve of areas and sectional shapes ensures premium displacement performance and a smooth and controllable transition to full speed planing.

The topsides - lower than current rules boats and making the boat look sleeker as a result - carry flare throughout to take advantage of the new maximum beam allowance, with an arced bottom shape developing from the fine bow and running aft with a smoothly curved chine line.

To those accustomed to the pronounced rocker of the current 14s the flat keel line of the new boat promises greater speed in marginal planing conditions and easier control. The onset of marginal planing will be earlier than ever in the new boat thanks to the new, bigger rig.

The new rules 14 sets a white sail area of 200sq ft on a 25ft mast and an unmeasured spinnaker that, in its first guise from Hyde Sails, weighs in at 378sq ft - a cool 100sq ft plus more than before. The new design has the mast 12in further aft than old rules 14s, with the centreboard a corresponding distance further back in the boat and the exquisite foam and mahogany rudder from Rollo Pyper being set on a gantry to maintain distance between rig, board and rudder.

The interior is beautifully clean, with the new rules additional 6in of beam being used to give plenty of working space despite the mast position. The crew will no doubt be spending more time right aft with the new configuration.

Mast design borrows from current 18ft skiff practice, with a metal matrix tube from Spun Spars of Australia being mated to a 'glass top - manufactured to Ovington designs by a Newcastle-based fishing rod manufacturer. It is supported by conventional shrouds, uppers and lowers - referred perhaps incorrectly by skiffies as D2s. The lowers, adjustable as is all standing rigging, run from the root of the lower spreaders and are used to control mid mast bend, transferring bend and gust reaction to the soft 'glass topmast.

The Hyde sails showed a remarkable range of shape when the rig was manipulated through its full repertoire, with the Kevlar/mylar main having a purposeful, high aspect ratio look. The minimal overlap jib is sheeted far closer than recent 14 practice thanks to the aft mast position and has a round entry shape that promises speed and a wider groove than the current flat entry sails. The huge new shape spinnaker sets on a retractable pole a foot shorter than the allowed 9ft to maintain balance in a hard reach.

One interesting feature of the new boat is the adjustable jib lead system adapted by Australian Andrew Cuddihy from Aussie 12 footer ideas. This simple alloy triangle slides on the space frame and is adjustable both transversely and vertically for the perfect lead angle. It minimises the distance from clew to lead block, maximising gust response, but demanding a new technique from the trapezing crew as it has to be cleated to windward.

Unfortunately the winds were light for the boat's outing at Itchenor, but it was clear from the swift acceleration in any gust, that the new rules 14s will be very quick around the course. The narrower waterline beam of the Ovington A seems to compensate for the greater light wind drag of the flat rocker shape, when compared to the older boats, but in any puff that allowed both crew onto the wire, the improvement in speed was noticeable. Under spinnaker - well, what would you expect from a 100sq ft increase?

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