

Kiwi gear dominates OK Dinghy Europeans

The Kiwi OK Dinghy sailors are always keen to tell everyone that they are the best sailors in the world and perhaps they are not far wrong. A look at the top 20 in the world ranking reveals no fewer than 11 Kiwis, including the double world champion Karl Purdie in the number one spot, but furthermore a glance at the gear list for the top finishers at the recently concluded European Championships in Medemblik also reveals a higher than average propensity for Europeans to use Kiwi originated or designed gear.

The winning hull was an Icebreaker, which has been the standard hull in New Zealand for decades. Now, thanks to the efforts of Chris Brown of Performance Composites who builds them and Alistair Deaves who finishes and markets them, the 30 year old design is now looking better than ever. Icebreakers from New Zealand have won six of the past 10 world championships and almost every regatta this year in which one has been used. Fourth placed Greg Wilcox, an ex-pat Kiwi running the Quantum sails loft in Potsdam was also using an Icebreaker hull and says they are the best hulls he has ever used – with 30 years under his belt in the class, that is no idle boast. A total of 15 sailors in the 61 boat fleet were using Icebreakers – 10 of them new ones from New Zealand - underlining how favourably it is viewed by some, despite the challenges of getting one all the way from Auckland to Europe. Five more were either UK or Polish copies or older hulls imported from New Zealand.

Since the class addressed the problem of lack of new builders in 2005 an increasing number of quality builders have emerged. As well as the Kiwi built Icebreaker there is Idle Composites in the UK, Delfs copies from Australia and boats from Karsten Kraus in Germany, BumbleBee in Poland (producing Icebreaker copies) and Ostbatar in Sweden, which manufactures the Hylander hull. Seven of the top 10 were using boats built in the last three years, all completely GRP, while three were older composites (Hein or Delfs).

Second placed Tim Goodbody – who won more races than anyone else – was sailing a UK built Idle Composites hull, which in fact is also an Icebreaker shape, having been moulded from Nick Craig's three times world championship winner GBR 2116. Breaking the trend was third placed Jørgen Lindhardtsen, who was using an old Delfs composite hull, but like many in the top 10 he was using a Quantum sail, which though built in Germany stems from Wilcox's long involvement in OK Dinghy sailmaking from his days with Port Nicholson Sails in Wellington, New Zealand. Goodbody also used a Quantum sail – in fact 11 out of the top 20 used Quantum sails. Championship winner Bartozs Rakacy was using a Linton sail, strangely enough from Wellington, New Zealand, though it had been heavily rebuilt. Counting back that is the top four sails built by Kiwis.

Several years ago Green sails from Denmark almost had a monopoly on mainland Europe and still produce race winning sails looking better than ever, with three inside the top 10. However the introduction of OK sails from other sailmakers in Europe, such as Quantum, P&B, WB and others has provided fast alternatives and if anything Quantum now has the largest market share in Europe while P&B and North still dominate numerically in the UK.

As for masts, the mast of the moment is the C-Tech from Auckland. Six out of the top 10 were using C-Techs including all the top five boats. Carbon masts were introduced to the class in 2003 and this allows individual sailors to tailor the mast to suit their weights and preferred mast bends. Ceilidh in Netherlands have also produced world beating masts with three world championship wins from 2005-8 and the company is set to relaunch its mast using a new design concept.

So in summary, gear development in the OK Dinghy continues with energy and enthusiasm, which

has to be healthy for any class. Though there is a real mix of hulls, masts and sails, Kiwi gear is predominantly favoured by many as being faster – eight of the top 10 were using some form of Kiwi gear. Whether this is because the gear is faster or because the Kiwis are faster because they are better sailors is a matter of conjecture. However individual hulls, masts and sails can and are built all over the world that can compete on equal and better terms. More importantly there is no one builder of any part of the gear that is completely dominant and this one fact alone keeps it fresh and exciting.

Top 10 boats at the 2010 OK Dinghy Europeans

Position	Hull	Mast	Sail
1	Icebreaker (NZL)	C-Tech	Linton
2	Icecreaker (GBR)	C-Tech	Quantum
3	Delfs (SWE)	C-Tech	Quantum
4	Icebreaker (NZL)	C-Tech	Quantum
5	Delfs (AUS)	C-Tech	P&B
6	Hein (GER)	Celidh	Green
7	Icebreaker (POL)	Marstrom	Green
8	Hein (GER)	One-off	Green
9	Icebreaker (NZL)	C-Tech	Quantum
10	Delfs (AUS)	Celidh	Cicada

[ends]