



## Andy Rice



Images by [ Christophe Favreau ]

**It's remarkable to think that next year the 505 will celebrate its 60th anniversary. John Westell's beautiful design really has stood the test of time. It also continues to attract the highest calibre of small-boat sailors outside the Olympic scene. Indeed this year's World Championship in Hamilton Island, a beautiful resort off the Queensland coast of Australia, attracted the world's best 49er team, Nathan Outteridge and Iain Jensen.**

**I**n addition to his Olympic duties, Outteridge is getting round the classes, having already won the Moth Worlds at the start of the year, and is coming to England to contest the Laser SB3 keelboat World Championships this summer. In the 505, he and Jensen did very well, finishing 9th. But they couldn't get close to the podium finishers.

It was expected to be a windy week, and so it proved, although nothing else about Hamilton Island lived up to its brochure as blue-sky, tropical idyll. It chucked it down with rain, albeit even the rain is 25 degrees Celsius, similar to the sea temperature. But there wasn't much to be seen

in the way of sunshine. Still, bearing in mind everything else that has struck the Pacific Rim in 2011 - floods, earthquakes, tsunamis and nuclear disasters - perhaps the Five-Oh fleet got off lightly.

With too much wind on some days and racing cancelled as a result, this year's Worlds didn't run to the full schedule. The wind and the waves should have worked in favour of the Aussies and the big teams from California, such as Mike Martin who dominated the windy San Francisco Worlds two years earlier, and the 2009 runner-up Mike Holt, a British expat resident in Santa Cruz who sails with Carl Smit.

However Martin, short on practice time and sailing with new crew Geoff Ewenson, could only manage 10th overall, a point behind the 49er kids. Holt and Smit, on the other hand, came very close to winning at windy Hamilton. The team that beat them was one of the lighter crews, the Germans Wolfgang Hunger and Julien Kleiner. This is now Hunger's fifth world title in the 505s, to add to the two 470 World Championships that he won in his heyday as perhaps the best 470 sailor never to have won an Olympic medal. For the much younger Kleiner, this was his second world title, following on from the one that he and Hunger won last year in Denmark.

I think we have an advantage downwind."

Still, like a lot of overseas teams, they were short on practice going into the event, but even here Kleiner sees some benefits. "I think we were very focused because we had not been sailing for four months before the regatta. When we came to Hamilton Island it was a lot of testing equipment and working on the boat. So we were very, very hungry for racing and very focused when we went on the water. I think that was an advantage."

Too right they were focused. The Germans won the first two races of the regatta, and led all the way to the end, although they still only won by



Originally Hunger and Kleiner said they wouldn't be defending their title in Hamilton Island, but the prospect of a long, cold winter in Germany without sailing was too much to bear. Kleiner comments: "Our training partners decided to go there quite early so we decided to head out for the sun in Australia, even if it wasn't the sunshine trip to the Great Barrier Reef as we had expected. But it was still warm, around 28 degrees and a lot of humidity; the water was 26 degrees so it was hard to find any clothing that was cool enough."

While the warm climate was certainly welcome, what about the prediction for a lot of breeze, which would hardly suit their 166kg combined weight? "I think the other top crews are much much heavier, like 15 or 20 kilos more, but we were not too afraid. We expected some of the American teams to be faster than we are upwind, but we have figured out that with a certain trim and a mainsail that is quite flat and really made for these windy conditions we can at least survive upwind and then

a whisker. "Yes, we had a very good start to the regatta," says Kleiner. "But sailing in these conditions was not that easy for us. We didn't have a big speed advantage to rely on, so were really working hard just to try and finish every single race in the top five. There was one race where we had problems with the spinnaker poles and we came 15th, and then coming into the final race we were only 3 points ahead of Mike Holt, so that was a really tough situation."

Holt recalls the situation going in the final race. "Three points behind, but with a better discard. With one beat to go we were one place away from the World Championship; we needed to be one place better or Wolfgang needed to be one place worse and we would have been World Champion so yeah, it was close, very close."

Holt and Smit pulled out all the stops to try to win. "Over the years, Carl and I have put in a huge amount of work and certainly as we were going



around the race track, Carl was reminding me of all the effort we'd put in to get this far and to keep going flat out to try to win. It doesn't matter if it's an open meeting, a National Championship or even a World Championship, we all want to win and when you've got the opportunity to win, you use everything within the rules to do that."

Holt did his best to peg Hunger back with some match racing and make him count that 15th place, but it wasn't to be. The aggressive move hadn't paid off. Afterwards, despite winning the Worlds, Hunger sounded none too pleased at having been engaged in a match race. "I don't understand wanting to win so much. I don't do this to win, I sail always to see what more I can get out of the boat and do with the boat; that is what is important to me."

The American team was quite taken aback by that. After all, they had done nothing outside the rules of racing. "Yeah, I was quite surprised that he said that. It was a very interesting last race, and there was a bit more to it than just the two of us because Sandy Higgins and Paul Marsh were also in with a very long shot of winning. If Wolfgang and Julien and Carl and I had both completely messed up and he won the race then there was also a shot that Sandy could win. I'm not sure if some of his comments were maybe somewhat lost in translation or whether he actually did mean literally what he said, but I've seen it happen at a number of Worlds where the last race has come down to a couple of boats and there's been a match race. We had the same thing happening with Mike Martin two years ago in San Francisco, so it's not without precedent."

"We certainly did everything well within the spirit of the rules, but we camped on him pretty hard on the last beat. Interestingly, the first aggressive move of the race came from Wolfgang, when they tacked hard on us up the first beat."

When I spoke to Julien Kleiner a few weeks after the Worlds, we asked if he and Hunger really had been as offended as the original quote implied. "It was a really exciting race and the leg upwind was around 20 tacks to get out of that prison he

put us in and finally to sail over the finish line. We had to break free with a gybe, which was really unusual for a fleet race when you're sailing upwind. I mean, there was quite some pressure and some excitement involved. But with the benefit of some time since then, he sailed in line with the rules and he tried everything to take the title. I think we had an answer to all his ideas, and that's the most important thing for us."

Kleiner still sounded a bit shocked by the level of match racing aggression. "For the time I've been sailing in the class, I haven't seen that [kind of racing], and the same goes for Wolfgang. But it was the World Championship and we're seeing these kind of tactics in several Olympics as well in other World Championships. As I said, it's in line with the rules, and it's close to the border of the rules. It's just unusual for fleet racing, but yeah, it was the last race, it was a match race and so fair enough."

Hunger and Kleiner now have a year and half to enjoy their ongoing status as 505 World Champions. They will be back to defend the title in La Rochelle in summer 2012, when the 505 celebrates its 60th anniversary. Mike Holt and Carl Smit will also be back to see if they can go one better than finishing as the bridesmaid, although Holt is more focused on Barbados 2013. "Carl and I lost quite a bit of weight already but we're going to be on the heavy side for the expected lighter winds in La Rochelle. I think Barbados and the stronger breezes there will be more to our liking."

## **Olympic Vote**

Some of the leading American teams have been experimenting with a bowsprit and asymmetric gennaker on the 505, with a view to making the boat simpler and slightly cheaper, whilst also making it easier to crew. It will be interesting to see how that experiment goes and whether the class makes the switch over.

While the 505 fleet is debating whether or not to go asymmetric, a whole bunch of new asymmetric twin-trapeze designs are waiting with bated breath to find out if the proposal for a women's skiff gets ratified for the Olympics in Rio 2016 and onwards.



**MARJOR**  
**OPTIMIST**

  
**LaserPerformance**

When the Event Committee put forward a slate of 10 events at last November's ISAF Annual Conference in Athens, the mood in the room was surprisingly calm and acquiescent. For a fuller report on what happened in Athens, you can refer back to my review in the January issue of SailRacing Magazine, but just to remind you of the 10 events that were proposed:

**Men's Board or kite board - evaluation of equipment**

**Women's board or kite board - evaluation of equipment**

**Men's one person dinghy - Laser**

**Women's one person dinghy - Laser radial**

**Men's 2nd one person dinghy - Finn**

**Men's skiff - 49er**

**Women's skiff - evaluation of equipment**

**Women's keelboat - Elliott 6m**

**Mixed multihull - evaluation of equipment**

**Mixed two person dinghy (spinnaker) - 470**

As the mid-year meeting, scheduled in early May in St Petersburg, draws closer, the different factions are beginning to mount their offensives and counter-offensives. Unless the chiefs at ISAF

take a strong hand in controlling the debate, the decision about which boats or boards go through to Rio 2016 looks in danger of descending into the usual undignified "mine's better than yours" rant.

The thing that seems to get lost in the typical ISAF debate is that the discussion is meant to be about Events as much as about Equipment. The smart thing for the equipment lobbyists would be to propose a package of an event combined with their favoured equipment that makes for an irresistible offer. For example, a stage race held over many days - perhaps even the full fortnight of the Olympic Games - with the fleet making a Le Mans start each morning off a beach and racing 40 miles down the coast to the next venue. Remind you of anything? The Worrell 1000, maybe, or the Archipelago Raid? Yes, this is prime multihull territory, far more exciting to the general public (and probably most sailing fans) than a windward/leeward course just a mile long. And what other types of equipment could touch the multihulls for this kind of endurance event? A skiff, possibly, or maybe a board. But probably not.

Let's hope that someone in St Petersburg keeps the people in the room focused on the bigger picture, and that ISAF doesn't revert to its old form of allowing single-interest groups to tear each other's eyes out like they've done in the past. There's much more at stake than what shaped boats our Olympic sailors go racing in.

