

sportsmanship, it is an action which is a breach of the Fundamental Rule of fair sailing. It may very well conclude that the action, because it was engaged in only close proximity of other yachts, was deliberately intended to make contact. Rule 38.1 — luffing as you please — is a defensive manoeuvre. The whole of the IYRU Rules are designed to minimise and avoid collisions. Any action that is designed to break the spirit of the Rules is a breach of fair sailing.

The essence of succeeding in a protest where there is contact by a stretched-out crew is that there must be sufficient evidence to show that the stretched-out position was used by that crew:

1. As a normal position.

Was used consistently during the race.

Was used not only near other yachts but whenever the opportunity allowed.

Was used when it was reasonable to assume that the helmsman of the other yacht could see it.

Was not done in an unexpected or unforeseen or unreasonable manner.

Hands up all those readers that have engaged in this tactic to deliberately put a competitor out. It is an indictment of modern sailing attitudes that an article such as this has to be written. The modern sailor seems prepared to "stretch the rules to any length" to win. Good manners, sportsmanship and fair sailing seem lacking in the armory of many young sailors. ▲

RLs roll on

(from page 40)

Marlay Point race but also commands respect as a competitor. He won the Australian championship last year (one that Yeomans did not contest), is a good seat-of-the-pants sailor who is at his best in fresher breezes. He has been in the class almost from its inception —

attracted to it by Rob Legg's performance at that 1973 Paynesville regatta — and has sailed in all 10 national championships. He has put three RL24s together from mouldings and has sailed his current one, Pegasus, since 1976.

The first five boats in heat six that afternoon were dagger-boarders. Castles sails a swing-keeler and I am interested in his reaction to a development that seems to have split the fleet with a single performance bound.

That evening I catch up with him, sitting around with many of the other competitors, in family groups, in the sailing squadron over the remnants of Chinese takeaway, sipping cask wine and chatting ... mostly about RL24 sailing.

No one seems over-concerned about the performance advances that have helped set Peter Yeomans apart; they accept that as inevitable in a development class and they are proud of being part of that class.

"The class has stayed alive because it has been able to develop," says Castles. "If we had started with a set of class rules in 1974 that said you could not change anything on the boat, it would be an anachronism today."

The RL24 was ahead of its time, before the main onslaught of the trailable yacht boom and before market-researchers tried to unravel the mystery of what the buyers wanted. "Rob Legg designed the boat for himself," said Castles. "It was his idea of what a good boat should be. It has strong appeal for cruising as well as racing; a lot of RL24 owners never race."

Castles said rig development was accelerated by one innovation rejected by the class: Trapezes were tried and then scrapped by a referendum of the class a few years ago. "That made us develop the rig."

There have been many experimenters besides Peter Yeomans. A competitor at the previous year's nationals used an hydraulic jack on the king post inside to spring up the cabin roof and tighten his rig. At this championship, Jack Walsh, from Lake Wellington, is using a section of blade from a crashed helicopter as his centreboard on Ohau Rua. He says its shape is hydrodynamically right, even if it is a bit twisted, and it has a titanium trailing edge.

The Victorians have a strong association with fleets of 20 regularly contesting State championships and 15-20 RL24s in every major open trailable yacht race. Virtually all of the Victorian boats have been home completed because, says Castles, of the viability of the association and the willingness of its members to help others.

Ross Corben, who is Victorian agent for the RL said that Peter Yeomans with his professional approach and attention to detail had lifted the class onto a different plane. "He has shown us what we ought to do and what we can do."

"I have taken the stainless steel liner out of my ice box for racing and the folding table is out. I have stopped short of taking the globes out of the nav lights as one of the blokes used to."

Bruce Castles said he was reluctant to strip out his cruising gear for any reason and he did not buy new sails very often. "The jib I am using is four seasons old. I won the nationals last year with a five-season old mainsail by Noel Brooke, who takes a big interest in the class in Victoria."

Down the fleet, skippers sailing with wives and family crews are less concerned with rig and keel developments than with simple gear-handling problems: such as the wife or 14-year-old son is too short to reach the spinnaker sheet for a takedown. Simon


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