

1995-1996 Australian National Cherub Championships and 12th Cherub World Championships 1996

by Neil Patchett.

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Australians Roger Perrett and Adrian Manning won the 12th World Cherub Championship with a five-minute blitz of their nearest rivals in the final heat on Botany Bay. Left in the wake of *Sports Cherub* were more than 60 boats and a degree of uncertainty about the future of the class.

Reigning 420 world champion Perrett, 22, and 470 campaigner Manning, 29, were late entries in the regatta that attracted 62 boats, including two from New Zealand and six from Britain. The new champions decided to compete in the event only a couple of weeks before the first heat.

The incentive to contest the title came when Mark Phillips, of Dinghy Sports, asked Perrett if he would like to sail a new "demo" production boat in the worlds. Perrett spoke with Manning and in a matter of days a boat was pulled out of the Dinghy Sports' mould and a rushed fitout began.

The Dinghy Sports Cherub did not comply with Australian rules and was not eligible to be considered for the Australian title. *Sports Cherub* and its two sister ships, however, did measure to British rules and were therefore clear to challenge for the worlds.

The existence of two types of Cherubs goes back to 1984 when British sailors decided to break away from the International Cherub rules because their proposed rule changes were rejected by Antipodean sailors. As a result, British Cherubs are narrower than the ANZAC variety and carry an asymmetric spinnaker on retracting pole instead of the more traditional symmetric chute set off a gybing pole.

It was believed the world championship on Botany Bay would provide the first true test of the two design rules and a chance for ANZAC sailors to evaluate the breakaway type. The results were not conclusive and a couple of new questions arose and some old ones remained unanswered. For example, was the winning margin of *Sports Cherub* a true indication of the boat's potential? Did the British results (two in the top 20) reflect the capability of their designs?



Australian champion Trick with a Knife.(Patchett picture)



World champion Sports Cherub.
(Patchett picture)

To tackle the first question, it is important to note the sum of Perrett and Manning's experience together in Cherubs was two trial sails. They had never raced together before and had never sailed with an asymmetric and were more accustomed to tactical sailing in one-design Olympic boats than the boat handling challenge presented by what is essentially a miniskiff. Toss into the equation the fact that *Sports Cherub* was an innovative design from Iain Murray and you have a couple of sailors jumping in at the deep end. As Perrett and Manning overcame these obstacles, they displayed their all-round class. Their inexperience and difficulties with the boat were highlighted in the heavy air of heat five. The *Sports Cherub* crew struggled to finish and eventually crossed the line in 13th place for its worst beat result.

Perrett said the fine bow, narrow chines and lack of foredeck on *Sports Cherub* were hard to handle, but added that this was something that could probably be overcome with practice. "In a breeze we found it a handful," Perrett said, "and were asking ourselves: 'how do we get downwind in this boat? In 25 knots we had extreme difficulty getting it downwind because it had a tendency to nose dive. Our inexperience in the boat showed. "As soon as we tried to bear away, it would put its nose down. The whole unit would sometimes go under water and we'd have to round up to survive with the crew going round the corner (the

bow)." The affable Perrett is not the type to boast, but it appeared likely that with more time in the boat he and Manning could have won more races and by greater margins.



Sports Cherub with, from left: builder Mark Phillips, skipper Roger Perrett, crew Adrian Manning (Patchett picture).

It seems the visiting British crews failed to come to terms the fresh conditions and, in particular, the notorious short chop that occurs off Brighton when the wind blows against tide. One of the pre-event favourites from Britain, *Pasta Frenzy*, sailed by David Roe and Helen Marsh, was fast and finished second behind Sports Cherub in heats two and three.

The title aspiration of Roe and Marsh then took a hammering when they broke a mast after finishing heat three in moderate to fresh conditions. They managed to scrounge a replacement spar for the next heat but a fresh southerly proved too much and after more gear failure they scored a dnf. None of the British team managed to finish in the heavy - air heat five. The *Pasta Frenzy* crew apparently ran out of spare bits and failed to start the remaining races. The Poms (a name they put on their

mainsails), besides being afflicted by gear failure, also had problems with the sail plans that generally featured heavily-coached mainsails with difficult-to-control leeches.

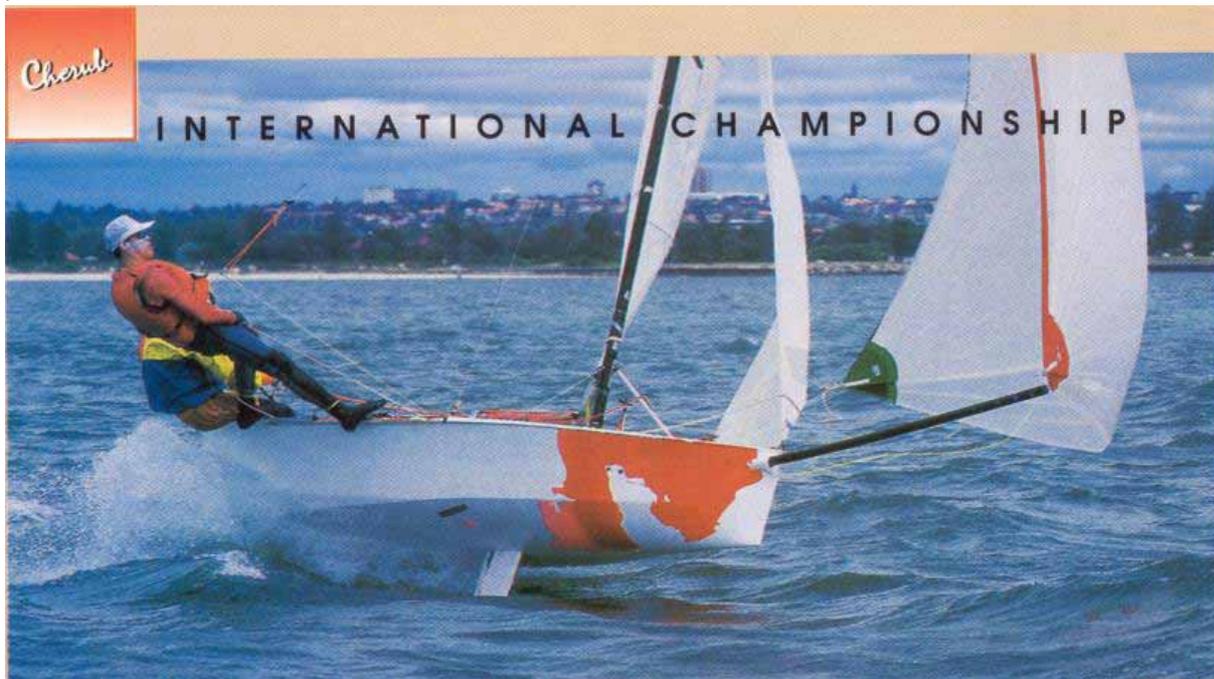
Sports Cherub had, in contrast, a relatively-small sail plan with short foot lengths, compared with the top conventional boats. And the asymmetric spinnaker was only slightly bigger than the Australian kites. With similar total sail area, the big advantages Perrett and Manning had were a narrow and easily-driven hull and an asymmetric kite. These factors provided the edge over world title runners-up Jamie Roberts and Jason Jordan. Where Perrett and Manning had logged just a few hours of Cherub sailing, Roberts and Jordan were experienced campaigners who had started as favourites in the previous two nationals.



King Neptune (Chris Hosking/Ben Gage).

An impressive combination of skill and tactics gave Roberts and Jordan's *Trick with a Knife* a chance of overall victory going into the final race. The Georges River Sailing Club crew needed to win (they placed second) and Sports Cherub had to place fifth or worse (they were first). The efforts of Roberts and Jordan may have fallen just short in the worlds, but were enough for a convincing win in the 33rd Cherub Australian championship.

"Andrew (Perrett) is a very smart sailor," Roberts said, "and their boat is fast upwind in almost all conditions but that is mainly because it is three inches narrower on each chine and it is a lot easier driven. I like the idea of an asymmetric but that is not the issue."



British boat Flying Trifle at full tilt. (Patchett picture)

Roberts said the main problem was the new narrow boats threatened the existing fleet. "I've been sailing these boats for three years and there are guys who have been sailing them for 20 years and all of a sudden someone else comes along and makes their boat obsolete," he said "It would have been easy to switch to asymmetries over the next two years. But because the new boats have come out and they are so narrow, they make it really hard for everyone because someone is going to lose money"..

NSW technical officer David Kelaher agreed and said people do not want to see their investment go to waste. However, he continued, home builders do not have such a problem changing boats because they only had to cover hull material costs (approximately \$2000-\$3000). A home builder could put a Cherub on the water for \$5000 whereas a custom boat could cost up to \$13,000.

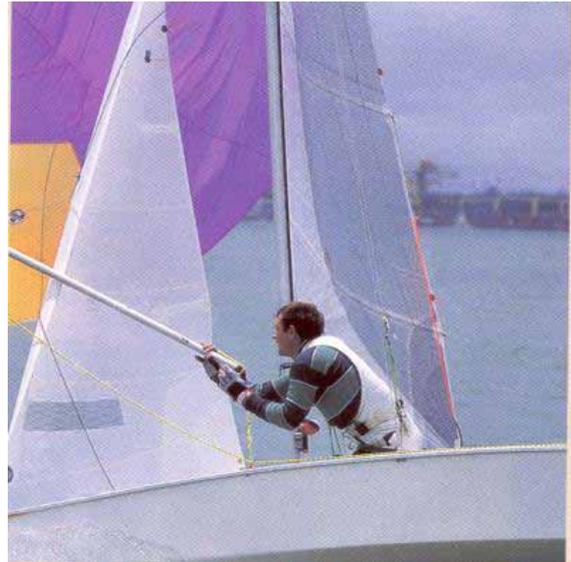
Trick With a Knife cost approximately \$9500 to put together from an O'Mahoney MkII shell which the crew decked, a standard section from Alcan was used for the mast (\$80) and a glass tip came from a hang-glider shop (\$50). North made all the sails. By comparison, Sports Cherub was a Dinghy Sports/Spunspar/Hood Sails package, built as a demonstration boat to show people what could be the next generation of Cherub, valued at approximately \$9900.



Start of heat seven (Patchett picture).



Pull the Plug-Craig Davidson/Simon Morcom (Patchett picture).



Jason McLaren on Groin Strain handles the pole - a disappearing task with asymmetric spinnakers likely (Patchett picture).

At the annual general meeting of the class, held during the regatta, it was resolved to hold a ballot among Australian owners to determine the future direction of the class and to tackle the issue of asymmetric kites and narrow hulls. A fetter that accompanied the ballot read: "Hugh Treharne (a principal player in the development of the Dinghy Sports Cherub) agrees that the UK rules are not appropriate particularly on the following points: a) a one design sail plan is required - there is nothing wrong with the existing plan so let's keep it. h) the UK hull rules are too open - we need a single chine boat with restrictions on beam".

President of the UK Cherub Class Owners Association. Simon Roberts, said the Botany Bay series was "without doubt a useful regatta" in terms of comparing types. The British sailors had heard about the Dinghy Sports boats before the series and were not surprised by what they saw.

The British team was going home feeling they were headed in the right direction with their rules, although the next time they visited Australia, the British would be better prepared for the conditions.

"I can't see the UK situation changing a great deal," he said. "We are certainly not in favour of one-design Cherubs. We would like to compete under one rule. but we would not want to go backwards (by increasing chine widths)."

Meanwhile, Mark Phillips of Dinghy Sports said it was impossible to stop progress and his plans included a national marketing campaign for the Sports Cherub. He said the boat would make an ideal feeder clans for the soon-to-be-announced Olympic two-handed dinghy.

World Championships

- 1, *Sports Cherub* (R. Perrett, A. Manning) 1-1-1-2-13-5-1. 13 points
- 2, *Trick With a Knife* (J. Roberts, J. Jordan) 5-4-3-1-3-2-2, 25.4;
3. *Rocky-N-Bullwinkle* (B. Smith, G. Stivano) 2-5-8-4-2-4-3, 37.7;
4. *Screamin Seamen* (M. Wren, I. Mortlock) 3-6-13-7-4-I-4. 46.4;
5. *Dry Reaching* (M. Harrington, B. Morris) 4-14-6-3-1-6-5. 47.1;
- 6, *Sayonara Baby* (J. Boyd, J. Bauchop) 6-38-10-5-10-8-10, 83.7;
7. *Groin Strain* (J. McLaren, A. Senn). 22-11-4-12-5-12-12. 89.

Australian National Championship:

1. *Trick With a Knife* 4-1-1-1-3-2-1, 8.7;
2. *Rocky-'n'-Bullwinkle* 1-2-6-3-2-4-2. 22.7;
3. *Screamin Seamen* 2-3-11-6-4-1-3, 34.1;
4. *Dry Reaching* 3-11-4-2-1-5-4. 34.7;
- 5, *Sayonara Baby* 5-29-8-4-10-6-6, 71.4;
6. *Groin Strain*. 17-8-2-11-5-9-8, 73;
- 7, *Rubber Hipped and Hoover-Lipped* (G. Robinson, J. McCulloch) 7-dnf-7-10-I6-3-7, 82.7.