

# Why an Un-Regatta? .... Just BIC-AUS!

## A small family club in FNQ takes a fresh approach

Tinaroo Sailing Club decided to take a fresh look at junior sailing in our region and if required, choose a completely new direction. The key was to pick the correct class to achieve this. For those who insist that juniors have an international pathway, there are 3 options available in Australia: the Optimist, the RS Tera and the O'pen Bic. The international option for us as a club was not important so we started researching a huge variety of junior classes across the world using the following criteria.

The boat had to be:

1. Affordable
2. Self-draining
3. of modern design with the "Cool" factor
4. Simple to Rig
5. Durable

The O'pen Bic design, together with the class's thoroughly modern and refreshing outlook on junior sailing satisfied these criteria best. It is the cheapest new junior racing boat available. It is completely self-draining, looks "Awesome", can be rigged in 2 minutes and has a hull made out of thermoformed polyethylene.

Now it is all very well for the management of our club to decide what was best for our members, if sailors didn't want to buy or sail the boat we would be wasting our time. It was imperative to convince the kids and their families that the O'pen BIC was a viable option for our junior sailors. Bevan McKavanagh from Glide Industries was instrumental in this process. He provided a demonstrator boat for us to trial. The Club executive decided that a critical mass of 5 families was needed to commit to the new class. The response from interested families was immediate as parents and their children were excited about being part of a new direction for sailing in the local area.

The club supported the concept by:

1. Buying three club boats
2. Providing boat storage free of charge to families for the first year.

## Overcoming some obstacles

Getting new boats to North Queensland has always been an issue the costs are high and when bundled in with other general cargo there is no guarantee that your boat will survive the trip. This little robust boat is wrapped in bubble wrap and transported by a normal courier service. Traditionally in Far North Queensland juniors have sailed the Sabot. Over the past 10 years there has been a dramatic decline in the number of junior sailors in the region becoming involved in the sport partly due to the difficulty in acquiring suitable boats for learn-to-sail members. Other issues included increasing costs and dissatisfaction with the measurement issues that have plagued this traditional stalwart. Despite efforts to promote sailing with regular learn to sail classes and "come and try sailing" days it was difficult to attract a long-term commitment to mastering sailing. We took delivery of the first boats on 16 December last year. In six months the fleet at Tinaroo has

grown to 17 as the potential of the O'pen BIC for young sailors became evident. Interest is growing in other Queensland centres with a boat in Townsville, another in Bowen and two in Mt Isa.

### What next? Run an Un-Regatta!

We are not really sure what an "un-regatta" is but the concept was copied from similar events held in North America and Europe. We set out to try and have a balance of fun events mixed with some serious racing. The whole weekend revolved around simplifying the rules and taking away the pressure as well as providing some good healthy competition. As well as attracting local sailors, competitors travelled from Darwin, Mount Isa and Townsville to participate in the Inaugural Great Tinaroo Un-Regatta. Tinaroo Sailing Club conducts its events on Lake Tinaroo, which is situated on the Atherton Tablelands, west of Cairns. The club's magnificent camping grounds were a great draw card for families enjoying their school holidays. We wanted the kids to have heaps of time on the water. Sailors and most importantly their parents were briefed on this philosophy thoroughly before the events got under way.

Soccer has Rooball. Hockey has Minky. Softball has Tee-Ball. Volleyball has Newcombe. Why not sailing?

#### Rules

1. Have Fun
2. No crashing
3. Port Tack gives way to Starboard Tack
4. On the same tack, windward boat keeps clear
5. Mark room

The Open Cross event involved sailors completing a course that involved a variety of manoeuvres and skills. These races had a Le Mans style start with sailors racing down the shore to their boats. The wetter the kids got the more fun they had. Everyone was a winner in these events.

The single and tandem freestyle events provided great entertainment for those on shore. Tail sinks, Hood Ornaments, Spidermans, King Kongs and spectacular dismounts formed the basis of the tricks performed.

Maya Reid took out the Singles competition with great agility and amazing work in front of the mast. Elyna and Charlotte Overland donned clown wigs and performed an intricate series of ballet poses to impress the judges and win the tandem. Maya Reid achieved the highest altitude in the difficult King Kong (mast climb). Angus MacGregor was the first to perform the highly daring boom run.

The speed slalom races formed part of the overall competition. Off the beach starts once again provided a spectacle. The less experienced sailors had a head start.

The speed races had the sailors reaching across an elongated figure 8 course. Sailors had to keep their wits about them when they met the rest of the fleet head on! Great for teaching port and starboard tack.

There were 5 conventional races as well. The 'on the water' starts and fleet racing tactics allowed the more experienced sailors to demonstrate their skills.

The 13 races of various types over the weekend helped to achieve our aim of maximum time on the water. No one had to bail and no one needed to be rescued!

Some of the Winners:

Overall Champion: Angus MacGregor

Sailor who had the most Fun: Kate Reid

Freestyle (singles): Maya Reid

Freestyle (tandem): Elyna and Charlotte Overland

Most amazing handstand (nothing to do with sailing): James Sellars

Under 12: Hamish Wiltshire

First Girl: Natalie Gray

### What the Kids say:

"The BIC is extremely manoeuvrable, making them ideal for freestyle moves"

"Really quick going downwind and reaching. In a breeze it planes easily"

"I was excited when I saw the BIC and I really wanted to have a go"

"I love the fact that when I capsize I can easily turn the boat over and keep sailing without having to bail at all"

"The un-regatta was really fun. Max, Hamish and me watched the skiff movie it was cool."

"The regatta was very fun and if you run another one I would certainly come"

### What the Parents say:

"The O'pen BIC is an inexpensive boat enabling us to own our own boat for learn-to-sail. The support of the Tinaroo Sailing Club and a terrific learn-to-sail program has meant that our children have mastered the basics of sailing with relative ease"

"our daughters are always keen to get on the water in their BICs and have alot of fun. The fact that they are independent when it comes to handling the boat from the shore and out on the water is a great bonus to parents from a non-sailing background!"

"As parents we love that our kids are out in the fresh air, being physically active, learning new skills, making friends, all while having fun. Do we need any more positives???"

"The boys are ecstatic about the weekend and their new boats. Hopefully we will be on the water this weekend for a lot more fun."

"The Open Bic has proven to be a great entry level dinghy for our three children. The girls can handle and rig the boat themselves in minutes, and it is responsive and exciting to sail. The first Australian 'Un-Regatta' at Tinaroo Saling Club enabled our girls to sail in a large fleet of genuinely one design boats, with the most important rule being 'to have fun' - and they did. It was great to see so many young children handling these small craft competently in a variety of conditions. Great for the future of the sport of sailing."

### The Future for O'pen BICs

Launched in France in September 2006 the O'pen BIC Class was formally recognized by ISAF in 2007 as an exciting junior single handed class that has been well received in Europe and is now rapidly expanding all over the world.

A modern, fast planning 45kg hull measuring 2.75 metres in length is based on the Open 60 design of a totally open self draining stern with similarities to a laser. The rig includes a fully-battened 4.5m<sup>2</sup> mono-film sail with mast pocket, similar to that of a windsurf board. Rigged on an epoxy mast, the sail has been designed with an open leech to give sailors maximum control and performance in windy conditions. The boat is beautifully finished and fitted out with state of the art Ronstan gear.

The class targets kids in the 10 to 16 year age bracket with the sailor's maximum ideal weight being 65 kgs.

Tinaroo Sailing Club is the first club in Australia to adopt the concept of the O'pen BIC. The future looks bright with clubs in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania all showing interest in the class.

The 2008 World Titles were held in Brittany, France. The regatta attracted 65 competitors from 8 countries. The 2009 World Championships will be held at the end of July in Medemblik, Holland

For further information on the O'pen BIC please contact Bevan McKavanagh Ph: 0404045774 or visit the Class Association website at: <http://class.openbic.com>

About the author:

Peter MacGregor is the Club Commodore at Tinaroo Sailing Club in Far North Queensland. He has been racing small boats for over 40 years. He learned to sail in a Manly Junior at Avalon Sailing Club. He has lived in FNQ for over 20 years now and has been deeply involved with teaching and coaching sailing during this time. He believes that sailing needs to evolve with the times. He is very excited about being involved in Tinaroo Sailing Club's move into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.