

Page 2: Progression Chart of High Performance Sailing Classes

Notes:

This Progression Chart was created in 2014 in consultation between some of the classes shown and many of the top sailors in them to try to provide useful information for New Zealand sailors and clubs.

Many Progression Charts are produced, you have to look critically at what they seek to achieve and if they are in your best interest. Historically a great number of sailors have advanced through dinghies into keel yacht racing and/or the Olympics. Yachts such as the Starling, Laser and Finn were a common route as sailors got bigger, older and heavier. There are a great number of good classes that are not mentioned here. It isn't intended as a snub or an insult. A great many good sailors who were not big enough were lost. The Jollyboat, Zephyr and OK also have big fleets and very competitive racing that makes them ideal for tactical racing in big fleets and surely an ideal step toward keel boat racing and match racing. The Jollyboat and Sunburst provide parent/child options too. Unfortunately some other heavily pushed classes are slow, very expensive and most sailors become cannon fodder for a few elite crews.

The purpose of this chart is to look at the 'apparent wind classes', an area that has been historically overlooked because it did not previously result in Olympic glory nor World Championships. That situation has changed with high speed sailing now in the Olympics and in the America's Cup too. The ideal situation would be to have a pool of talent sailing in the apparent wind classes where boats are relatively cheap, have good longevity and great racing. For many there will be no reason to ever leave. AC sailors typically sail in a range of classes, hopping around sailing everything because there aren't AC events every week.

The 'apparent wind classes' are typically more difficult to learn, but provide exhilarating results; so nobody can get bored. The issues are learning to trapeze on a fast reach, gybing fast from wire to wire, depowering and adjusting over-powered sail plans to be fast and easy to manage (in far too much breeze), changing gears for different breezes, sailing in high apparent winds and learning to sail in classes where things happen much faster, getting heavily punished for poor setup and being richly rewarded for getting it right. Sailing fast to windward, not just high and slow.

It is obvious that not many Optimist sailors will eventually sail on an AC yacht, through sheer weight of numbers. The purpose of the chart is not to get everyone from an Optimist into an AC team. Many sailors will like to sail in FAST classes that have national contests in good fleets with boats that have good longevity and which contain a large number of very good sailors to learn from and to enjoy racing with. A better goal is for all sailors to enjoy sailing for life. Key senior classes in the middle of this are the Paper Tiger and Farr 3.7, they are not a passing fashion currently being 'pumped' by commercial interests, they have had National Class status continuously for decades. Rather than lamenting the lack of 3.7 or PT in their local area, sailors needing to move on from junior classes need to start their own cells locally. The 3.7 and the PT both have sailors ranging in age from 16 to 70yrs old. So Starling parents should push off the beach and start sailing again in these same classes too, with double decker trailers!

All the class associations (not just the ones mentioned here) are keen to help and support. The focus on the apparent wind classes has been a while coming. All the people who have helped in creation of this chart just want to encourage you to come out on the water to get into some part of it.