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# **A Class Catamaran**

**<http://www.a-cat.org.au/history/>**

## **HISTORY:**

The International Yacht Racing Union formulated rules for the International Catamaran Divisions in 1962 with approved amendments in 1963 and 1964. The purpose of these rules was to encourage racing and development within four divisions. It was hoped that International status would be granted to one or more classes within each division.

## **DESIGNS:**

The first A division catamaran registered in Australia was designed and built by John Smallman of Victoria in 1966.

The first A cats built in Sydney were Graham Johnston's A-Cat 1 and Harold Stevenson's Camira. Johnston's A-Cat went on to become the Australis, winning every race in a selection trial at Blairgowrie in March 1967. This selection trial was for an Australian representative to the I.Y.R.U. trials in England in July 1967 to select catamarans to International status within the 4 divisions. Graham Johnston then took his boat to England and won International status. The Australis Association was formed shortly afterwards.

From there the Australis progressed slowly, was altered slightly and due to decreasing numbers lost its International status at the I.Y.R.U. meeting, 5th Nov. 1973. In the meantime the open A class division continued beside the Australis with many different designs being sailed in Australia. Some of these included the Unicorn, Quest A, Buccaneer, Harmony and Rhapsody designs. Of these the most popular was the Unicorn design. In the next few years the Stevenson designed Rhapsody gained greater popularity. Since then we have seen the development of the Hooper designed Colonial designs and the modified Rhapsody designs from Greg Goodall.

All modern designs have been improvements on earlier models.



The greatest breakthrough in design has certainly been in rig development. In the early days rigs were supported by very bendy pear section masts of 27 to 28 foot in length. Since the 1981 Botany Bay World's where the Australian designed and manufactured Wing Mast came to the fore, sail development has centred on a rig size of 30 to 32 feet. Whilst the Austwing remained popular in the early 1980's, the Italian Sori mast, and more recently the Goodall copy, with more stiffness has dominated the higher placings in recent championships. The Sydney built Spunspar mast of similar dimensions but not as stiff has also proved popular with the lighter weight sailors in recent years.

In 1987/88 Barry marmion introduced the flat top rig on an untapered Goodall mast. This sail had a cut away leech for greater heavy weather performance and also swept the deck to create an end plate effect. Whilst the flat head has remained popular, the deck sweeper was abandoned shortly afterwards. Various sailmakers have developed these sails further with larger head boards. Some have continued the cut away leech concept, but recently this seems to have lost favour.

No one single design of A cat has proved dominant, thus supporting the principle of open design and development within a class. In Australia today half a dozen different designs are actively campaigned in all Eastern States. Although the trend now-a-days is to Carbon and Kevlar/Glass foam sandwich construction, plywood boats are still to be found actively campaigned.

Following on the trends of Europe, Carbon masts started to enter the Australian market in the 93/94 season, with construction by Jim Boyer. After several teething problems this production was stopped in favour of importing European masts. At the 1996/97 Nationals half the fleet used carbon masts, with several being of home made construction. Carbon masts are being now being produced in commercial quantities in Europe, America and Australia.

Australian sailmakers are equal to the best in the World having the largest number of World champions and used by half the fleet at the 1998 European Championships.

Since 1980 the A class's performance has improved to the point of dropping 6.5 points on the VYC yardstick ratings.

### **NATIONAL CHAMPIONS:**

The National trophy was presented by Graham and Kevin Johnston to the Australian A Division Catamaran association in 1967. The winners of this event have been:

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>VENUE</b>	<b>CHAMPION</b>
1965/66	Sorrento (Vic)	J. Smallman
1966/67	Blairgowrie (Vic)	G. Johnston
1967/68	Wangi Wangi (NSW)	J. Goodier
1968/69	Darwin (NT)	A. Wright
1969/70	Sorrento (Vic)	T. Glanville
1970/71	Botany Bay (NSW)	B. Leverton
1971/72	Canberra (ACT)	B. Leverton
1972/73	Belmont (NSW)	H. Stevenson
1973/74	L.Cootharaba(Qld)	P. White
1974/75	Glenelg (S.A)	B. Thomas
1975/76	Albury (NSW)	H. Stevenson
1976/77	Kurnell (NSW)	B. Thomas
1977/78	L.Cootharaba(Qld)	K. Austin
1978/79	Blairgowrie (Vic)	H. Stevenson
1979/80	Forster (NSW)	B. Hooper
1980/81	Kurnell (NSW)	K. Austin
1981/82	L.Cootharaba(Qld)	G. Goodall
1982/83	Waranga (Vic)	B. Hooper

	(equal)	G. Goodall
1983/84	Speers Point(NSW)	B. Hooper
1984/85	Yeppoon (Qld)	S. Anderson
1985/86	Long Jetty (NSW)	B. Hooper
1986/87	Blairgowrie (VIC)	J. Foreman
1987/88	L.Cootharaba(Qld)	P. Backhouse
1988/89	Belmont (NSW)	S. Anderson
1989/90	McCrae (Vic)	D. Renouf
1990/91	L.Cootharaba(Qld)	P. McKenzie
1991/92	Paynesville (Vic)	G. Harbour
1992/93	Wangi Wangi (NSW)	P. McKenzie
1993/94	L.Cootharaba(Qld)	G. Weidrich
	(Open event – first Australian)	R.Thomas
1994/95	Geelong(Vic)	H. Sinclair
1995/96	Kingston SE (S.A)	H. Sinclair
1996/97	Tanilba Bay (NSW)	P.McKenzie
1997/98	L. Cootharaba(Qld)	C. Owen
1998/99	McCrae (Vic)	<b>G. Ashby</b>
99/2000	Kurnell (NSW)	L. Hein
2000/01	Hervey Bay (Qld)	B. Collett
2001/02	Adelaide (SA)	S. Brewin
2002/03	Geelong (Vic)	<b>G. Ashby</b>
2003/04	Port Stephens (NSW)	<b>G. Ashby</b>
2004/05	Hervey Bay (Qld)	<b>G. Ashby</b>
2005/06	Blairgowrie (Vic)	<b>G. Ashby</b>
2006/07	Belmont (NSW)	<b>G. Ashby</b>
2007/08	Hervey Bay (Qld)	S. Brewin

2008/09	Belmont (NSW)	<b>G. Ashby</b>
2009/10	Safety Beach (Vic)	S.Brewin
2010/11	Lake Cootharaba (Qld)	<b>G.Ashby</b>
2011/12	Wangi Wangi (NSW)	<b>G.Ashby</b>

## IACA HISTORY

The International A-Division Catamaran Association (IACA) was founded on 8th May, 1975 with the prime intention to co-ordinate and supervise the activities of the National Associations of A-Division Catamarans. Interest in A cats was then very high in several European countries, North America, Great Britain and Australia. European championships were held from 1975 until 1980 with Kerry Holmes (Qld) the European champion in 1979.

World championships have been held since 1981 with **Australians** continuing to dominate by **winning 11 of these 15 championships.**

To date A Cats are sailed in 15 countries throughout the World, covering Great Britain, France, Netherlands, Denmark, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia.

### WORLD CHAMPIONS:

YEAR	VENUE	CHAMPION	NATIONALITY
1981	Botany Bay (Aust.)	B. Anderson	Australia
1982	Cesanatico (Italy)	A. Babbi	Italy
1984	Wellington (N.Z.)	A. Goodall	Australia
1985	Spray Beach (USA.)	A. Goodall	Australia
1986	Brenzone (Italy)	S. Anderson	Australia

1987	Blairgowrie (Aust.)	B. Schafferius	Australia
1988	Turkey Point(Can.)	G. Goodall	Australia
1990	Napier (N.Z.)	G. Goodall	Australia
1991	Gromitz (Germany)	P. McKenzie	Australia
1992	Silvaplana (Switz.)	P. McKenzie	Australia
1993	Sanguinet (France)	E. Babbi	Italy
1994	Lake Cootharaba (Aust)	M. Booth	Australia
1995	Andijk (Holland)	E. Babbi	Italy
1996	L'Estartit (Spain)	<b>G. Ashby</b>	Australia
1997	Long Beach (USA.)	P. Melvin	U.S.A.
1999	McCrae (Aust.)	N. Bunkenburg	Germany
2000	Cesenatico (Italy)	N. Bunkenburg	Germany
2001	Port Genesta (Spain)	S. Brewin	Australia
2002	Martha's Vineyard (USA)	<b>G. Ashby</b>	Australia
2004	New Plymouth (NZ)	<b>G. Ashby</b>	Australia
2005	Sanguinet (France)	P. Melvin	U.S.A.
2006	Vastervik (Sweden)	<b>G. Ashby</b>	Australia
2007	Ismoralda (US)	<b>G.Ashby</b>	Australia
2008	No Worlds held		
2009	Lake MacQuarie (Aust)	<b>G.Ashby</b>	Australia
2010	Cesenatico (Italy)	<b>G.Ashby</b>	Australia
2011	Aarhus (Denmark)	S.Brewin	Australia

## Background [ex Wikipedia]

The class was founded during the 1960s and was part of the 4-tier IYRU (now ISAF) approach to divide up the sports catamaran sailing scene into 4 separate groups. These A, B, C and D classes were governed by a very small set of class rules to which each design had to comply. In the beginning it was just:

- Maximum hull length
- Maximum overall width
- Maximum sail area

All boats designed and built to these specs would be grouped into one fleet and race each other for crossing the finish line first.

[Numerically], the A-Class is the largest remaining of those 4 main classes. The B-Class [was the berth place for the Olympic Tornado], but quickly splintered into a score of sub classes like the Hobie 16's, Formula 18's and other classes that contain far more and far stricter class rules. The C-Class quickly developed into the really high tech and vanguard boats that were used in the Little America's Cup. These require immense investments of time and money to race and so this class is extremely small but still maintains its status as the ultimate sailing catamaran designs. The D class never really got off the ground in earnest.

## Specifications

The official organisation for the A-Class catamaran is the IACA (International A division Catamarans Association).

The A-Class rules were expanded over time to prevent the cost of these boats from rising too high and to ensure fairness in racing.

Currently the main A-Class class rules are:

- Min overall boat weight : 75 kg
- Max overall boat length : 5.49 m (= still the old IYRU rule)
- Max overall boat width : 2.30 m (= still the old IYRU rule)
- Max sail area incl. mast : 13.94 m<sup>2</sup> (= still the old IYRU rule)

## Current situation

The A-Class design has over time converged to a single sail rig using a lightweight carbon mast of about 9 meters length and using lightweight pentex or Kevlar sailcloth. The hulls and beams are often made out of carbon fibre as well. This single sail rig (just a mainsail) allows these boats to truly excel when sailing upwind. Their lightweight and time tested sailing techniques make these boats very fast on reaches and downwind legs as well. They were often unbeatable on the race course and only with the introduction of the asymmetric spinnaker on other catamarans have they lost this position a little bit.

In the decades since their foundation the A-Class has gathered a significant international following and it has class organisations in many countries around the globe. Their world championships often attracts around 100 boats and sailors. It is also a class that still contains a significant portion of homebuilders, although their numbers are decreasing

with every year due to the skills required to make a competitive boat. However, nearly all A-Class sailors tinker with their setups and boats. As it is a developmental class and the rules do allow so much variation, it is paramount that a top sailor keeps experimenting with new setups and generally tries to improve the design even more. Because of this general character of the class, the A-Class is often leading over other catamaran classes in terms of design development. Over time these other classes copy new findings for their own setups. Examples of such developments are: the carbon mast, the squaretop mainsail, the wave-piercer hull design and in general the use of exotic materials.

## **Glenn Ashby**

**Glenn Ashby** (born 1 September 1977) is an Australian sailor from Bendigo, Victoria. He and skipper Darren Bundock are the 2007 world champions in the Tornado class and ranked number one in the event going into the 2008 Summer Olympics. However, they were beaten by the Spanish team and won silver. He has also won nine A Class Australian national championships.

Since 1996 he has won 14 World championships across three multihull classes, including seven in the A Class. At the 2008 Olympic Games he won a Silver medal, sailing a Tornado with fellow Australian Darren Bundock. He has been sailing and coaching in the Extreme 40 class and was head coach with BMW Oracle's 90ft trimaran for the 33rd America's Cup win. Glenn is now the Emirates Team New Zealand 34th AC campaign wing trimmer and a member of the design team.