

The Laser Story



*Designer, **Bruce Kirby**, comments on America's fast selling 'second generation off-the-beach boat'. Launched at the 1971 New York boat show she was an immediate success and there is now a flourishing class.*

The Laser was designed as a singlehander with simplicity and performance as the chief criteria. The builder wanted a boat that was attractive, easy to build so that the price could be kept competitive with other boats in the size range and sporty enough to appeal to the thousands of people who had begun their sailing in the board boat fleets and wanted to graduate. We also hoped we might attract accomplished helmsmen from established classes who were looking for a low cost hot class which could be sailed almost anywhere on very short notice and without a crew.

I chose a waterline length of 12.5 ft as I thought this was the minimum from which the desired performance could be wrung. With what seemed to be a pleasing forward overhang, this gave us an overall length of 13 ft 7.5 in, which became 13 ft 10.5 in when the rolled over

deck was added. In all these pre-drafting calculations an important consideration was all-up weight. We wanted the boat to be easily car topped, easily handled from a trailer and on a beach by one person and reasonably easily handled by women and children. So beam and freeboard were kept down, the overall beam coming out to 4.5 ft, including deck overhang, and the freeboard forward just 12 in. I had been aiming at a hull weight of 120 lb, and this has turned out to be between 128 lb and 133 lb in the production boats after two hard-driven prototypes, one at 110 lb and one at 118 lb, had indicated that some beefing up here and there was in order.

In choosing a sail area of only 76 sq ft I felt that the rather slim and light hull would not require more in light airs, and that such a hull might not tolerate any more in a breeze. In any case it would be easy, and relatively cheap, to adjust the sail plan in the prototype stage.

The two-piece, cantilevered mast, jointed near the middle, with the sail pulling over it like a sock was a direct take-off of an earlier design