



Not Bailing

New entry level boat adopts the best from proven themes, by Bob Ross

BOATBUILDER Mark Phillips of Dinghy Sports, with no shortage of expert advice from well-qualified sailing parents in his area like yacht designer Iain Murray and sailmaker Michael Coxon, has developed the unsinkable, knockabout kid's sailing boat, the Pittwater Junior.

Basically, it has the hull shell of the Sabot, which Dinghy Sports has built in numbers, with a false floor installed to make it unsinkable and easy to right after a capsize and an unstayed single-sail rig with a two-piece windsurfer



mast and a boom.

Since 1985, Dinghy Sports has built 234 Sabots, which has become the most popular kids' boat in Australia, sailed in every state and territory.

At the 2002 Australian championships, there were more than 200 boats in the junior (two-up)

and senior one-up (under 16 years of age) divisions.

Dinghy Sports also builds the next most popular children's trainer in Australia, the Manly Junior.

The Manly Junior class and Dinghy

Sports worked together to add a false floor, self-draining cockpit to the boat three seasons ago, for easier righting after a capsiz and a drier boat at any time.

Dinghy Sports started off designating the Pittwater Junior, the Mark II Sabot, earning the displeasure of the Sabot class, which rightly saw the class name as its intellectual property.

The situation was not quite the same as with the Manly Junior, where the false floor could be retrofitted to existing boats. Apart from the external shape, the Pittwater Junior has a vastly different rig and deck/cockpit configuration.



The false floor allows greater cockpit space.



Sail is soft, easier for beginners to read.



The PJ sailed well, even under adult weight.

The name, with its snappy PJ acronym, was chosen for the area in which it began, based on Avalon Sailing Club. The boat is intended to be an inexpensive, robust, fun boat for children learning to sail. Those with promise will be directed on into Sabots or Manly Juniors.

"By combining the best features of the Sabot with the simplicity of a Laser and the modern rig and materials from windsurfing and rational thinking, we have come up with a boat that is safe, simple and relatively inexpensive," Phillips says.

He says he is still working with Sabots to have the PJs sail at club level with them, or in a separate division.

"We want to make it more like Kangaroo cricket or T-ball, as an introductory boat. We are never going to have a PJ nationals or state titles.

"Anyone looking really good, I would encourage them and their parents to go on into Manly Juniors or Sabots, where there is already a strong class structure."

The hull

The false floor is set as low as possible, with a curvature of up to 100mm in the centre. The centre support and front bulkhead are incorporated into this moulding. Blocks of polystyrene foam are located inside the false floor to make the boat truly unsinkable.

Dinghy Sports reduced the size of the Sabot's bow tank so the boat would float level and lower when capsized. The Sabot floats bow up in this situation, making it hard for the crew to climb onto the centreboard and also causing it to turn turtle quickly, which can trap a crew member underneath.

The buoyancy in the mast helps hold it

there. When the boat is righted from the capsized, the water drains out and the boat can be sailed immediately without any bailing bucket or venturi self-bailer required.

With almost all the water drained, the boat is harder to climb into from the sides than a Sabot which remains half full of water. As all good Sabot sailors know, the best way to get back into a Sabot without swamping it again is by climbing in over the transom.

The PJ, without a back tank and cut away transom, is much easier to slide into over the transom.

Construction is more robust than the Unstayed mast and sail are well matched.





Level in the capsize.



Re-entry over the transom is easy.

Sabot, with an extra laminate on the fibreglass/foam sandwich hull. The PJ weighs 25kg compared with the 22kg minimum for the Sabot which, Phillips says, is very light.

He explains: "When we put the false floor in the Manly Junior, the association agreed that the old ones and the new ones should sail together. So we made the new ones carry a two kilo corrector weight, with the theory that an old boat would carry water and the new one wouldn't."

"I thought I would build this one 2kg heavier so it could sail fairly against a normal Sabot."

The centreboard case is almost the same width as the centreboard so there is no need for a slot gasket. With the snug fit, the centreboard stays in the correct position to balance the boat.

Centreboard and rudder blade are fashioned from plywood, for cost savings over fibreglass/foam fins. A set of hand-made shaped Sabot class centreboards and rudders costs \$700 now, says Phillips. The foils and aluminium rudder box for the PJ cost \$550.

The rudder blade folds up and over, on top of the tiller, for neat stowage.

Rig and sails

The mast is simply a windsurfer fibreglass/carbon spar that is light (3kg), buoyant, relatively cheap (\$250) and easy to obtain from any sailboard shop.

It comes in two pieces of similar length to the boom. All three can be kept in the sail bag for convenient storage inside the boat. The boom is a simple anodised tube, with no sail track and a rowlock for attachment to the mast.

The rig would measure in as a Sabot, although the boom has been shortened slightly. The sail is cross-cut Dacron, with a pocket luff that slides over the mast.

The sail is "soft" with short battens with the rationale that it is easier for a beginner to "read" than the fully-battened Sabot, when the cloth near the mast luffs and shakes, indicating the boat is being sailed too high into the wind.

The mast tip is fitted with a halyard lock – a simple spring-loaded stainless steel pin, so the sail can be dropped from on board the boat. There is no outhaul, the loose-footed sail is pulled out by hand while rigging to slot a hook at the clew into one of three holes, for slightly different foot tensioning options at the boom end. The mainsheet is a simple four-part system, with ratchet block incorporated, anchored to the centrecase.

The boat is supplied with a safety check list to be followed before setting sail, from ensuring that hatches and bungs are fitted, to wearing sun screen and carrying water.

Sails ... like a Sabot

I was one of three adults who folded themselves into the PJ to sail the boat during the Australian Marine Awards judging on Sydney Harbour.

On a light day (fortunately) and with body weights approximating two big kids, the boat did sail well. It was quite responsive to puffs in the 8-10 knot breeze.

The sail is full and generates quite a lot of power. The sail-mast combination was good, so sail shape for fluctuations in the breeze strength could be readily varied by mainsheet tension.

With the boom high set, the PJ was easy to tack and gybe, even for clumsy adults. Getting going after a capsize was as easy as Mark Phillips said it would be.

One obvious demerit, however, was over-abrasive nature of the non-skid pattern on the cockpit floor, which took bits out of the knees and feet.

Specifications

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| Length overall | 2.4m |
| Beam | 1.2m |
| Weight (hull) | 25kg |
| Sail area | 3.4sqm |
| Price: complete sail-away on rigging cradle: \$3999 (including GST). | |
| Builder: Dinghy Sports Australia, 5c/89 Darley St, Mona Vale, NSW 2103; phone, 02 9997 1636; fax, 02 9979 9825; email, dinghysports@aol.com | |



Two piece mast, sail on boom stows easily.

Halyard lock is a simple spring-loaded pin.