

The Farr 3.7 as a boat to develop youth sailors?

As a Senior Sailing Instructor of nine years and a Club Race Coach of five, I have always struggled to suggest to cadets a sensible progression boat, for those who want to sail single handed but want to learn the skills needed to sail fast handicap single handed trapeze boats. It was after seeing Daryl's Farr 3.7 at the Dinghy show and then test sailing it, that has urged me to write this.

It has always surprised me that with the skiff style boats becoming more popular, why there is not a light weight, small, slightly slower boat, with all the toys and some of the characteristics of the Musto Skiff and RS700, readily available on the market which, cadets, light weight or vertically challenged adults could sail! In my experience, cadets at our club progress through the RYA recommended classes and unless they want to stay in double handers and go into the 29er, there is nothing really out there. I have investigated through the internet the European options which might cater for these types of sailors and did fall across the 'light Skiff' which I believe Ovington looked at producing, but did not decide to continue and that is about it! Due to this fact, our cadets then opt to go straight into much faster boats such as the Musto Skiff or RS700 before they have gained the skills to sail them. Apart from a few (who I will say developed very quickly) it has normally meant they struggle with keeping the boat upright and the experience ends up being a very expensive and sometimes a painful experience. This has unfortunately turned some of them off sailing or they only sailing in light airs.

After seeing the boat and talking with Daryl, we arranged a test sail. I knew that if we were to get an honest answer we needed a cadet who was regularly sailing a single handed hiking boat. After going through the list of older Club cadets JC came up as the Ideal candidate to take on a test sail. JC is 18 and has raced Toppers, Lasers and done some crewing in 420's and Fireballs. Until the test sail he had never trapezed and helmed.

To those of you who have never heard of the Farr 3.7 I will just give you the brief outline of it (details and all of Daryl experiences can be read on his blog).

<http://ukfarr37.blogspot.co.uk/>

The Farr 3.7 is:

- 12ft so it fits in the garage!
- It is light at 50kgs easy for a cadet to launch and get onto and off of road trailers or car top.
- Has a light mast which is easy to get up and down
- A non-technical rig set up with only a few ropes and controls
- Basically it's a get in and sail boat

The test sail

From the ramp the wind was looking to be about a force 3. Ex Cherub Helm Ben Brown was 1st up. Hiking as soon as he got a safe distance off shore and then out on the wire in surprising little breeze. As the wind built the boat responded well, Ben freed off slightly and the boat was happy to accelerate onto the plane. After 20mins a happy Ben came in and JC was up.

Now I wouldn't say that he nailed the art of Farr 3.7 sailing straight away, but in hiking mode JC was very comfortable. It was at the point where he had to change from hiking to the wire where he was in new territory. The end result was a few swims but as all the onlookers agreed, the boat looked more forgiving than an RS700 or Musto. It was also very easy to right after a capsize with no tendency to turtle. After a time JC started to get the knack of the transition from hiking to wire while helming and was in much more control. I won't say anymore as I have asked JC to write up his experience of the sail. (see page 4)

So onto my go! Now before I go any further, I will explain I have sailed a number of different boats in the last five years which include Laser, Cherub, Musto Skiff and at present I have a RS700. I am by no means a great sailor, as I seem to spend too much time coaching and not enough time sailing!

As I stepped into the boat the wind built from JC's sail and as I moved away from the rib I did think, "this is a lot smaller than the 700!" The rig is smaller than the RS however it is fully battened and I was surprised at the power it created. I was soon on the wire upwind. If I had to sum it up in a word it was 'controllable' but needed constant adjustments of body trim to keep it moving quickly. Good for getting cadets to develop practical understanding of trim. Small body movements made a lot of difference to the boats speed over the water. In the lulls the wide beam meant I wasn't T bagged as I have been on the RS, I had time to get inboard and go to hiking mode! I think as well as the hull shape the C-tec mast and north sails worked very well together. The mast is softer than the 700 and Musto, and this means

in gusts the leach opens up and 'flicks off' which aided stability without losing too much power. On the bear away the boat accelerates well and there were more glimpses of the lively skiff characteristics I have experienced in the past. Again the correct weight positioning was needed to stop the short bow going down, but at no point did it look like it would trip over. I could go on but Pete Barton who has far more experience than I have given a very comprehensive report for Y&Y when he test sailed it. If you want to know more have a look on the UK Farr 3.7 website for his review.

<http://www.uk3-7class.org/test-sail.html>

So after the test sail, would the Farr 3.7 fill the gap between lasers and high performance single handed skiffs? In my opinion, YES. It is a controllable boat in the weather we sailed it in (average 15knts) but I believe although it would become more challenging with more wind it would still be controllable. You get the same kind of feel from the Farr 3.7 as you do in a skiff, it picks up and goes quickly but unlike the skiff, it travels at speeds young sailors can handle giving them just enough time for them to react and if they do end up in the drink, it is more embarrassing than physically painful!

Personally I would like to see the UK boat have a kite, so Cadets can learn controlling the kite from the wire. I think NZ class association rule set has it right, allowing a recreational kite but not allowing it for racing. I am also aware that Daryl wants to keep in line with the NZ class which is very sensible. Finally I think it is great news that Daryl has found a builder in the UK, and that the builder wants to make the boat affordable.

Now at this point I must confess that although I wanted to test sail the boat to see if it would be good for cadets I also wanted to find a boat for me. My issue is due to coaching and other commitments I don't have every weekend to sail, like many adults as we get older free time becomes very limited! I want a boat to just get into and sail/race in the few weekends I have free which has the potential to get exciting! I bought a RS700 over the Musto for price and that reports said it was more manageable skiff which I think in many ways it is but it still does require time on the water to sail it probably. The sail I had in the Farr 3.7 was fun exciting and I could see me not just wanting to recreationally sail it but race it!

If you're a cadet wanting to learn the skills needed for high performance sailing or an adult who wants fun without having to spend a lot of time (and a lot of swims) perfecting your boat handling, try and get a test sail and I hope you have as much fun as we did.

Thanks to Daryl and I have no doubt I will at some point soon buy a Farr 3.7!

These are the words of JC. An 18 year old sailor who test sailed the Farr 3.7 at Blackwater Sailing Club Bank Holiday Monday 07/05/12. He wrote this for inclusion on the BSC website. He weighs 60kg.

My Farr 3.7 Test Sail

Having sailed more regular boats in my life such as toppers, lasers, 420s and fireballs, I didn't really know what to expect from the Farr 3.7, being a single handed trapeze boat that is unlike anything else I have ever had the opportunity to sail before. The concept of trapezing and helming at the same time was new to me and was more difficult to get to grips with than I had first anticipated, not helped by the tiller being as long as I am tall! This resulted in me going for more than a few swims throughout the afternoon but I began to get more used to it towards the end and with a few more sails I'd be confident of being able to sail it competitively.

I think it has a lot of potential to be the perfect transitional boat between more conventional boats and skiffs, which would avoid the difficulty of trying to go straight into a skiff and spending most of your time upside down. Not only that, but it would be a good competitive racing fleet if it would be possible to get a few of them going at the club. Obviously this would be difficult because of currently having to ship them over from New Zealand but I think it would be more than worthwhile if there were enough people up for it. *(The Farr 3.7 is currently being put into production by Butler Boats and is also available to build from plan with pre laser cut parts available as a delivered pack from Robbins Timber Bristol with the cost of a self build hull being around £650).*

Despite capsizing I didn't have any trouble keeping the boat flat and if I got more used to the controls of the boat I'd be confident going out in stronger winds. *(Test sail wind 10-15knts, gusts shown around 18knts)*

Overall, I think the Farr 3.7 is a great boat and it was a thoroughly enjoyable sail. I would definitely want to sail one again and would probably already own one by now if they were easier to get a hold of! If they become more easily available or if I can persuade my parents to splash out on shipping costs then I will definitely be one of the first to consider getting one at the club! If you're looking to move into a skiff or just looking for something new and different then I would definitely recommend looking into investing in a Farr 3.7.