

FAST FUN

The Elliott Seven is proving a popular craft for performance minded sailors wanting a fast club racer with the convenience and low maintenance of a trailerable.

Story and photos by Andrew Mitchell.

The term 'trailer sailer' is waning in its relevance as a description of modern day trailerable yachts. The 'trailer sailer' boom during the seventies saw various designs hit the water in large numbers. Several of these designs were compromise efforts to maximise interior space and ease of towing.

In recent years new trailerable designs have placed less emphasis on accommodations and more emphasis on performance, often displaying superior performance to keelboats several feet longer.

Greg Elliott, who dramatically changed the direction of trailer yachts when he released the Elliott 5.9, (tagged at the time by some as "a dinghy with a cabin on it"), believes that for most people a boat of trailerable size is too small for much more than racing, daysailing and the occasional weekend cruise. As interior requirements for this sort of activity are minimal, more attention can be turned to maximising sailing performance.

The market responded well to Elliott's move towards what he has labelled "the trailerable sports yacht". The 5.9 has become well established as a one-design class since it appeared on the scene in 1983; and more recently the Elliott Seven has been launched in steady numbers in the face of a recessionary new-boat market.

These cost-effective, low-wooded and well-ballasted boats incorporate the latest thinking in efficient and sta-



ble hull shapes. With larger, more open cockpits, they are both fast and easy to sail.

While the 5.9 and 6.5 were designed to fit under New Zealand Trailer Yacht Association class limitations at that time, Elliott designed the Seven following a request from business associates in Japan. "There were no trailer boats at all in Japan at that time so it was thought to be quite a novel boat when it was released," says Elliott.

The prototype was displayed at the Tokyo Boat show and was voted second best boat behind the Farr MRX, another New Zealand product. Four orders were received immediately prompting Elliott Marine to produce moulds and begin production. To date, 34 Elliott Sevens have been built at the company's North Shore premises, 18 of which were sold into Japan. Fifteen more have been built in Australia under licence.

The yacht has enjoyed several victories in open keelboat fleets under Japan's unique cruiser rating system

and even prompted authorities to add a high speed-correction factor to the system to counter the Elliott Sevens' domination.

The design has also raced with success in New Zealand, winning line honours at the 1992 National Trailer Yacht Championship. However, the performance capabilities of modern trailer yachts has seen emphasis shift from participation in trailer yacht events to more involvement in open keel-

boat fleets.

Elliott says most owners are performance oriented people keen on competing in their local club events and Wednesday Night races plus the occasional cruise.

The Elliott Seven differs considerably from its smaller predecessors. The 5.9 may have been labelled a "big dinghy," but "small keelboat on a trailer" would be a more apt description of the Seven. The extra length has allowed the lines to be more fair and therefore faster. More fullness forward and a firm bilge aft suggest the boat is intended to excel at reaching and running, although Elliott says the boat has proved devastatingly quick upwind in light airs also.

Trailing factors were carefully considered when the boat was designed. With a total weight under 1000kgs, a simple trailer (without brakes) can be used and the unit can be towed easily by a medium-size vehicle.

Our test sail was lots of fun - which is what these boats are all about. The Elliott Seven is surprisingly quick to



plane and surf under spinnaker, only needing a 12-15 knot puff to strut her stuff, while the helm remained light and responsive throughout the excitement. Upwind, the hull sliced through the bouncy Waitemata chop well enough after experimenting with sail trim and organizing crew weight on the rail. The optimum crew number for racing is four for weight reasons, although the cockpit layout has been designed so that all functions can be carried out easily with two or three people.

The cockpit is busy, as can be expected on a 7m boat with near as many controls as a 12m boat - but very workable. All deck gear is Ronstan with Lewmar winches. There are two self-tailers on the cabin roof for halyards, headsail sheets and lifting the centre-board, with two smaller winches in the cockpit for spinnaker sheets. The helmsman can sit aft or forward of the traveller with the tiller fully extended so all controls are within his or her reach. The 6:1 mainsheet has a fine tuner which makes accurate trimming easy even in a stiff breeze. There are no coamings, no bridge deck, and the transom is completely open - a simple, no-

fuss layout that allows three crew plus a for'ard hand enough room to go about their business without falling over each other - not always easy to achieve in a lively boat this size.

Spinnaker work is easy. The pole is stored on the boom and is simply

pulled forward and clipped on to the sail with the for'ard hand directing proceedings from the safety of the forward hatch.

The outboard (8hp Yamaha on the test boat) is attached to a bracket on the transom to starboard of the rudder.



Main Pic: Fast and fun is the essence of Elliott Seven sailing. **Above:** The Seven is a lively performer under spinnaker even in moderate breezes.



This whole unit pivots inboard once the sails are set so that the outboard lies along the cockpit floor. As there are no runners required on the Elliott 7 and therefore no reason for anyone to be in this area, this system appears to be little hindrance, although some sort of pad on the floor might be useful to protect the gel coat.

Hull construction is E-glass over a PVC foam core laid up in a female mould. The deck and cabin utilise Coremat instead of the PVC foam to make it easier for owners to bolt on deck fittings.



Main Pic: The layout has been carefully thought out so the yacht can be sailed by two, three, or four crew. Above left: With the genoa tracks mounted on the cabin top, the side decks are clear and comfortable for sitting on the rail 'keelboat style'. Below: Clear, simple and efficient cockpit layout.

The foils are also moulded, the keel being a two-piece affair encapsulating the bulb – the lead billet is inserted before the two halves are joined together. This avoids performance-hindering gouges developing in the bulb when going aground as well as preventing owners reshaping the bulb and thereby detracting from the one-design aspect of the boat.

Accommodations are basic; There is sitting headroom in the cabin area and



two berths forward in a vee arrangement which continues aft to form two full-size quarter berths with ample storage underneath. The centreboard case, obviously a necessary obstruction but probably the only major drawback of a trailerable boat, limits the usable interior space. If the Elliott Seven was used for overnight excursions, a portable cooker would be used. One envisages most of the living and socialising would take place in the cockpit.

The rig is a very simple swept single spreader affair from Mast and Spar Services. All rig and equipment is supplied standard, with the owners choosing their preferred sailmaker and outboard motor. Our test boat was powered by Port Nicholson Sails from Wellington, where the boat is destined.

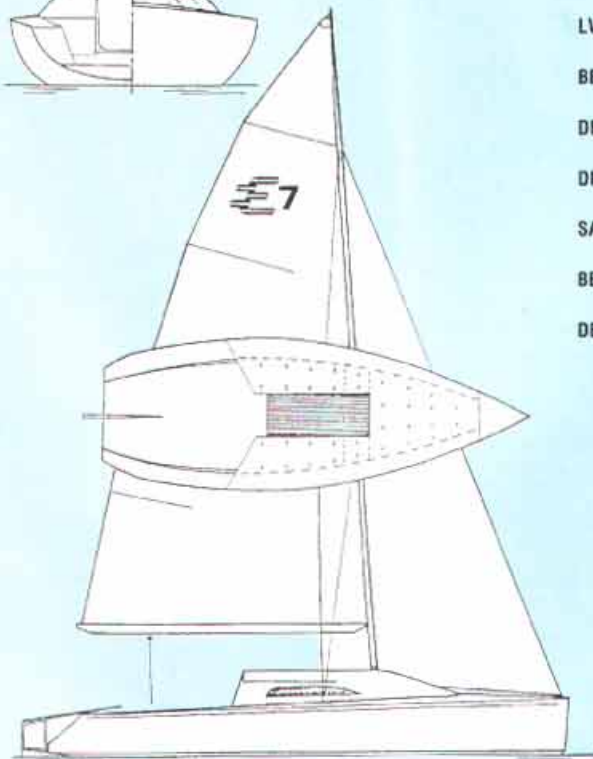
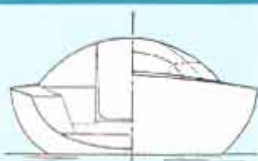


A 12 knot puff and the Elliott Seven is on the plane and away!

The Elliott Seven represents a new breed of yacht that offers the racing ability of a keelboat, exciting speed and handling plus affordability. These factors, combined with the convenience and low maintenance associated with a trailerable, should ensure this type of craft has a healthy future. ↓



SPECIFICATIONS



LOA	7M
LWL	6.25M
BEAM	2.45M
DRAFT	1.6M
DISPLACEMENT	695KG
SAIL AREA	26.7MSQ
BERTHS	4
DESIGNER	Greg Elliott