



PHOTO: PIERRECK CONTIN/PHILEAS



PHOTO: NEAL PAWSON

## Open 5.70

**Neal Pawson** checks out this Sportsboat from Phileas Boats, which is thriving in France and has now hit the UK.

### Specifications

<b>Design:</b>	Group Finot
<b>LOA:</b>	5.70m
<b>Beam:</b>	2.53m
<b>Draught:</b>	1.75m (racing)
<b>Displacement:</b>	510kg
<b>Sail area:</b>	Main 17sq m Jib 8.31sq m Spinnaker 35sq m
<b>Crew weight:</b>	250kg
<b>Price:</b>	<b>£19,950</b> (trailer with GRP cradle £2,250)

In an effort to bring you this test I suffered a nightmare ferry trip that culminated in waiting for the AA in a car park in Poole at 0400hrs. I won't, however, allow this to pollute my thoughts on the baby Open class Sportsboat – as those memories still bring a smile to my face.

Although new to the UK the Open 5.70 class were holding their third Coup d'Europe in St Malo when I visited to check out the boats, boasting an entry of 25 boats for some close, competitive racing. Previous events have been held at Torbole on Garda and Hyères in the South of France, with over 260 boats built. Phileas are part of Hobie Cat Europe group and the boats are being introduced over here by Boating Sports. The class

has already proved its ability to sell outside France with 16 boats sold in the US west coast, nine of which attended their recent nationals – they even have a second set of moulds on their way over in an effort to combat the effects of the falling US dollar.

### Design and build

The Open 5.70 is a Groupe Finot design, off the same drawingboard as famous solo round the world Open 60s such as 'Hugo Boss' and previous Vendée Globe winner 'PRB'. It is a spin-off from their Open 7.50 design Sportsboat, which is popular on the Atlantic coast in France. A sharp plumb bow immediately flares out into wide dish sections with a long flat run aft with low freeboard. The shallow,

wide, open cockpit dominates the boat with hiking straps and generous kick strips either side. Forward there is a dome-like coachroof that dominates the foredeck and can make any trip forward an adventure with its shiny smooth finish. At the bow the headsail furler is recessed into the foredeck. Shroud plates are neatly inserted into the topsides of the hull ensuring that no sharp metal will gouge the topsides at a start line raft up.

The keel is a simple slot daggerboard with bulb on the tip – it is prevented from sliding all the way through and secured in place by two pins at the forward and aft ends of the fin, locking into plastic pad-eyes either side. These pad-eyes provide a fuse if the boat is grounded, with the plastic breaking allowing the fin to rise in the slot rather than causing any structural damage. This does leave it sticking up slightly in the otherwise clear cockpit floor.

Lifting the keel is either with a simple stainless gantry and trailer winch or with the mainsheet tackle fixed to the main halyard. The boat is easy to slip on and off the trailer requiring only a small amount of water.

### Rig and layout

Although a strict one-design the class has allowed revisions over the early years to refine the product and keep it up to date. The twin rudder steering system has been overhauled to make it more precise, allow a greater rudder angle and give more space in the cockpit. What was a twin tiller system has been changed to tie bar and single centrally mounted tiller, similar to most Mini 650s. The downside is that the previous mid mounting point for the outboard has had to be offset and when in use only minimal helm can be used to steer, any big turns need to be done with the outboard. Although there is this provision all the boats race without outboards. The rudders were also originally kick-up beach cat models but have been replaced with lock-in ones with gudgeon pins, again producing more precise steering but with added complications when launching from the trailer.

The sailplan has also been up-dated with a greater spinnaker area and a very nice looking square top mainsail in place of the original rounded roach. These are all from the class sailmaker but are of good quality and include the option of a single reef, their design having benefited by refinement by Alex Udin at Sail Innovation. This has boosted the boat's performance in light airs, although the very low aspect asymmetric – which only



LEFT AND BELOW Fits snugly on its trailer, and is easy to launch.

hoists to the hounds – does look a bit different. It does, however, allow a very simple beach cat rig with rotating wing section mast with a single set of diamonds, unsupported above the hounds. There is a single shroud either side and the headsail is set on a furler. The boom gooseneck is a fixed carbon mast gate, pinned in place to the aft end of the dome coachroof. This allows one person to pivot the mast up and temporarily hold in place whilst attaching the wire stays. The aft sheeting on the boom and full width track allows a lightweight small section boom.

The main halyard is 2:1 with a horn cleat to belay, removing any chance of accidentally releasing it. The headsail has 2:1 sheets with longitudinal tracks mounted on the cockpit floor, which give the headsails some overlap inside the shrouds allowing easy adjustment. Care has to be taken in setting the angle of the cleats on the floating blocks to allow easy release from the side deck. All other controls are to hand with the spinnaker halyard and cunningham mounted on the aft face of the mast, pole outhaul and spinnaker tack exiting from the aft face of the bulkhead.

The interior is accessed through a round hatch offset to starboard in the mast bulkhead. With the spinnaker bag to port this means you can gain access without having to remove or clear anything. Inside it is very basic with sealed buoyancy tanks that could, if you were desperate, provide a sleeping surface. The sails all fit within this space although require the battens to be bent slightly in the mainsail. Some water will enter here though the sprit seal so remember to have a watertight bag for your personal items!



PHOTO: NEAL PAWSON



LEFT The boat features a high aspect square top main and generous jib.

PHOTO: NEAL PAWSON



PHOTO: JP IMAGING/BOATING SPORTS\*

**On the water**

In light airs the wide flat bottom combined with the low aspect spinnaker require some different techniques; upwind the weight is aggressively forward and to leeward in an attempt to raise the wide transom. The long tiller extension allows the helm to join the rest of the crew at the front of the

cockpit. Downwind you revert to Optimist techniques, heeling the boat heavily to windward to halve the wetted surface, easing the tack of the spinnaker and rotating the luff of the spinnaker whilst driving as deep as you dare. It can be a bit of a challenge to keep the spinnaker full in fighting the battle against gravity. The mast sometimes needs manual assistance to rotate as it has no boom pressure and no tackle on the mast spanner, relying on wind in the sail to rotate it round and provide a smooth entry.

As the wind comes up it is strange to be sailing a boat where it is fastest heeled to 20 degrees, similar to keeping the windward hull of a cat just skimming the surface. This puts the leeward rudder perpendicular to the water. It seems to need at least 16 knots to really get the 5.70 flying downwind, up until this point you are still driving as deep as possible just heeled to leeward. As the breeze reaches the 20s the fun starts with the bow popping up and the boat skipping off the waves. This takes place without the normal knife edge of judgment before wiping out, partly due to the stable wide hull and partly the relatively low aspect of the rig. When it does go wrong then the boat just hangs with the side deck underwater but a dry cockpit, quickly righting itself when the sheets are released. It definitely has two modes to its trim, with the crew sliding right forward to maximise upwind speed and

then rapidly moving aft when bearing away in a breeze. In yet another parallel with multihulls, when bearing away at the windward mark the bow drives down when bearing away!

With the mainsheet running off the full width track at the transom it feels like going back to the days of sailing Wayfarers and Toppers with an aft mainsheet system, instead of the more common mid-boom set-up that brings the tail in front of the helm. Various teams cope with this in different ways, some even having a main trimmer aft of the helm! Upwind the track is generally set close to centre then the mainsheet played with the gusts, allowing the fat head to twist off. Downwind the car is dropped to the end of the track. There is a minimal vang that is in place to prevent excessive twist off the wind; with a very small section the boom wouldn't cope with any greater load. Gybing is relatively simple as the main can be left to take care of itself sliding smoothly along the Harken track across the transom, the boom's light section adding little weight as it sweeps over.

The loads are relatively light, even the low aspect spinnaker can be handled by young crew members up to 14 knots, above this it does quickly load up with quite high sheet loads in a strong breeze. This is reflected in a very mixed fleet with families sailing together, older people and a large number of women racing in the class. The long foot of the low aspect

spinnaker and the proximity to the water does mean care has to be taken to avoid trawling when hoisting and dropping.

The hull form definitely rewards a practised technique of rolling the boat through the tacks and gybes to prevent the boat from losing its way during the manoeuvre in light winds and benefits greatly from picking flat spots to tack in... yet another multihull similarity. The twin rudders give plenty of grip and manoeuvrability, although at speed all the foils on the test boat 'sung'. When planing there was also a bit of 'suck' down the keel slot to add to the speed orchestra.

The heel and big beam leaves the water rushing along the leeward rail and the bow dipping into the waves upwind as the boat settles with a slight bow down attitude. Off the wind when planing the forward position is definitely a wet one taking a large portion of the bow waves head on! The rounded side tanks offer comfortable hiking and despite my initial trepidation there was no need to be nervous about staying in the shallow cockpit with toe straps and deep kicking strips. In fact I found it quite refreshing to be able to hike the boat in the restrictive age of granny bars or guardrails on most Sportsboats.

**The verdict**

Racing in the fleet proved tight with five boats finishing within 10 seconds at the Europeans, and with sail numbers ranging in finishing order from 44, 157 and 250 the boats seem to remain competitive over the years. With the Open 5.70 pitching to become an ISAF sanctioned class, Phileas providing comprehensive regatta support with spare parts and organisational assistance which always helps to maintain the fun at events - if it is a little bit laidback at times - the class has all the ingredients for success.

As well as being a popular racing class

this is also a great lifestyle boat, one that you can safely go out in a breeze and just have a blast for fun, taking the family out or even alone. Between racing I jumped onboard with one of the two American crews that had made the long trip over the pond. Interestingly, they talked about how they sail in the States where some venues see conditions where winds rarely get above 12 knots, so father and son go out two-up whilst others take to solo sailing to boost fleet numbers.

The class tradition dictates that all the boats have names ending in 'ic' so start racking your brains now and you too can join the simple, fun and inclusive Open 5.70 family! ■



PHOTOS: NEAL PAINSON



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**ABOVE** In light winds, using the 'Optimist heel' to reduce wetted area.

**TOP LEFT** The 'busy' end of the cockpit, spinnaker to port, hatch to starboard and sail controls in the middle. Note unused mast spanner and little-used vang. Pole/tackline and jib furling line exit the coachroof, and the halyards and cunningham are mast mounted.

**MID LEFT** The 5.70 features a twin rudder, single tiller system.

**LEFT** The fused keel fixings.

**RIGHT** In a breeze the 5.70 provides good, stable, fun, and unlike some of her competitors, you are free to hike!



PHOTO: JP IMAGING/BOATING SPORTS\*

<p><b>Laser SB3</b> Huge class, massive one-design fleets, growing in Europe but relatively expensive LOA: 6.1m Beam: 2.15m Sail area: Upwind 27.3sq m Spinnaker 46sq m Guide price: £?</p>	<p><b>RS K6</b> Hiking two or three-man keelboat, slightly smaller, racing limited to the UK. LOA: 5.8m Beam: 1.97m Sail area: Upwind 19.7sq m Spinnaker 29sq m Guide price: £15,950</p>
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**Answer Back** From Phileas Boats  
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