



Gavin Colby

# MEET THE *World* champion

**Gavin Colby** learnt to sail the Hobie 16 at home in Australia and after 10 years became world champion. He's also won the biggest cat race in the world – the 2001 edition of Round Texel – racing a Hobie Tiger Formula 18. So who better to ask why the Hobie 16 has become a classic...

**When did you start sailing the Hobie 16?**

First time was when I was 15 in 1992. I borrowed a boat from our local dealer to do a regatta. I then bought my first and only Hobie 16 when I was 17, using money borrowed from my girlfriend-of-the-time's mum! I pretty much raced and sailed the Hobie 16 non-stop until I started sailing in Europe three years ago, when it became very much part-time.

**Is the Hobie 16 relevant to modern cats?**

What the Hobie 16 teaches you is vitally important for all cat classes. I had never sailed anything bigger until I came to Europe. Perhaps the reason why my transition to Formula 18 was not so hard was because of the time I did on the good old 16.

**Some people rate the Hobie 16 as a dinosaur. What do you say?**

It was designed a while ago, for sure. But things you learn from a 16 you take and relate to any cat class. Anyone who says the 16 is a dinosaur or a terrible boat probably sails a rival class, or has tried to sail the Hobie 16, thought it would be a push-over and failed.

I crewed on a 16 at a local Sunday club race (I never crew!) in Perth in January, sailing with a 17-year-old guy who was just back from the Aussie nationals. We had a great time in 30-plus degrees (Celsius of course) with 20 knots of wind and had an absolute ball. It still is an awesome reaching machine!

**The Hobie 16 can have nasty habits, like being difficult to tack and prone to pitchpole both ways. Is that fair criticism?**

Just watch a Tornado race and you will notice the lack of tacking that goes on. Not because the boat is slow to tack, but because tacking speed is so much slower than a straight line. A 16 is a little slower to tack, but when done correctly it's not that hard or that slow. The trick is to let lots of main out. Do it once you are head to wind and the rest is easy! Backwards capsizing is solved by having a quick crew, and the Hobie 16 doesn't forward capsize any more than a Formula 18.

**What are the best ways to make a Hobie 16 go fast?**

Always sail with too much horse-power. Lots of rig tension and lots of mainsheet – bend the mast and flatten the sail. That's how you go fast.