

# LEVELING THE FIELD

A LOOK AT THE FIVE MOST POPULAR ONE-DESIGN BOATS BY DAVID SCHMIDT



HOBIE 16



LASER



SUNFISH



OPTIMIST



J/24

**G**rand-prix sailing is spectacular. It's all about cutting-edge designs, high-tech gear and exotic-fiber sails, and top-flight (often professional) crews pushing boats to their limits. But many very talented sailors simply can't afford to compete at this level. Is the grand-prix circuit where the world's most competitive sailing really takes place?

Enter one-design racing, where each class association dictates what gear is legal and tries to keep all the boats virtually identical. The effect is to eliminate arms races and replace them with the old-fashioned virtues—skill, tactics, and athleticism. As with a sport like running, where a pair of Nikes and a nominal en-

try fee gets you into a road race, the only thing separating the good from the great in one-design racing is true talent (and, yes, a few bucks). This is why so many of sailing's biggest names have their roots in one-designs, and why one-design racing is the fastest-growing element of competitive sailing in the U.S.

There are roughly 150 active one-design classes in the U.S. alone, with varying numbers of competing boats and different levels of competition. Most one-design boats cost a reasonable amount to obtain and campaign, can be raced virtually anywhere—trailerred to and launched off a beach—and offer excellent competition and unbeatable fun. **C**



## HOBIE 16

**H**obart "Hobie" Alter can best be described as a surfer with a sailing problem. The one-time surfboard builder turned his attention to designing catamarans, starting with the Hobie 14, in 1967, but it wasn't until 1969 that he came up with his masterpiece, the Hobie 16. One aspect of Hobie sailing so many sailors find appealing is that these beach-launched raceboats offer excitement (read: capsizes) in all wind conditions. It's a characteristic that resonated with many sailors who preferred high-speed thrills to yacht-club pomp and circumstance. This dual-trapeze rock-etching is hands-down the world's most popular—and colorful—catamaran, and its fans still follow the 1970s mantra: "Have a Hobie day."

### SHAUN FERRY

2006 WORLD CHAMPION

Age: 44  
 Nationality: South African  
 Number of years sailing: 31  
 Number of years racing Hobie 16s: 31  
 Favorite sailing venue: Langebaan, South Africa  
 Occupation: Sales



**Do you have any special prerace rituals?**  
 I do a lot of running and swimming before an event. I take time to clear my head and think about what can go wrong on a racecourse and what I can do to get out of these situations. This way, if they do occur, I've already been there mentally and have a Plan B.

**What practice drills do you find effective when preparing for a big regatta?**  
 Sailing between two marks that are about 300 feet apart and doing four tacks and four gybes. This way I learn to look out of the boat and not worry about boathandling.

**Do you enjoy big-boat racing or offshore sailing?**

I've been bouncing between racing big boats and racing Hobies since 1980. I skipped a Mount Gay 30 on the South African racing circuit and won a few events. I also skipped a 54-footer. I sailed the Tour de France race on a Mumm 30, and during the beginning of 2005 I was a part-time team member of South Africa's America's Cup team, Team Shosholoza.

**Do you have any go-fast tips for sailing a Hobie 16?**

When I go sailing, I never look at what I'm doing on the boat. The key is *looking out*. To achieve this I do a lot of fun sailing. If I were worried about nosediving, for example, I would go out and see how far I could push the nose. I find that after a while you can sail the boat more on the edge and achieve better boatspeed. I did this on all the racing angles and eventually learned how far I would be able to push the boat and still be in control.

#### VITAL STATS: HOBIE 16

LOA: 16'7"

Beam: 7'11"

Draft: 10"

Crew: 2

Weight: 320 pounds

Rig type: Fractional sloop

Sail area: 218 square feet

Approximate number worldwide:

100,000+

Cost, new: \$8,395

Used, typical asking prices:

From +/- \$2,000 (beater) to +/- \$4,500 (race ready)



International Hobie Class Association,  
[www.hobieclass.com](http://www.hobieclass.com)

PHOTOS BY J.H. PETERSON (TOP); COURTESY OF SHAUN FERRY (LEFT)