

Background to the IC Questionnaire

Why have this Questionnaire?

The ICF Sailing Committee undertook to produce this following the Skipper's Meeting at the Bristol RI World Championship. The purpose of the document is to help us to develop a clearer strategy about the future development of the class. We hope that the considerable time spent redrafting and proof reading of both this Background document and the Questionnaire will ensure their effectiveness.

At the outset it should be stressed that there is no problem, or crisis, within the IC class; rather the opposite, we want to harness all the positive enthusiasm to best effect. It is **not** a vote on specific rule changes. The results of this survey will be published on the International web site as soon as possible after the **March 29th** deadline for responding.

For many years we have been able to promote the class as "the fastest single-handed mono-hull". How important is that title now that there is a whole new generation of potential rival designs coming through? What is so special about the IC to every one of us? How can we further "improve" the IC? Is "improvement" just a question of ultimate performance, or easier handling, reduced cost, increased popularity or some other criteria?

The first three questions address the issues of what sort of class we want to be.

Question 1.

At present the IC is a development class loosely based on the Nethercot hull design. The building tolerances were left relatively loose to allow for easier home building. It has recently been realised that, due to a difference in interpretation of the hull measurement procedure between some countries, there has already been an unintended relaxation of the hull tolerances. This has arisen from one set of tolerances (sections) being applied over the range of another (hull rocker). Looking back over a few years it can be seen that no apparent benefit has resulted from this and the committee has now ensured that the rules and procedures have been clarified to take account of this.

If we should try to tighten the hull tolerances it would be necessary to introduce a moulds/tools register. If any existing boats should need to be "grand-fathered", then their tooling would need to be taken out of use as a consequence. We therefore need to consider the considerable investment made by our builders in their moulds and tools and the potential difficulties of regulation by the International and National committees. This issue becomes critical when one considers Q.3

The Nethercot design is arguably outdated, but it does provide a platform upon which other developments, in rigs, foils, construction etc., have taken place. It is a unique concept with the sliding seat and two white sails. **The current canoe provides excellent competition across a wide range of crew weights and weather conditions.**

Question 2.

If we go to a full development class, then it is very likely that we will improve overall performance, but that the IC and ICA would quickly evolve away from each other as each type seeks to optimise their strengths. We would also probably develop canoes more dependent on specific conditions, or crew weights to perform at their best. Most UK development classes have now tended to settle on good all-round shapes. We also need to face the issue of making the existing fleet obsolescent more quickly. In the longer term we could end up faster, stronger and lighter and better able to continue at the forefront of the sport. The example of the Int. 14 shows how painful this process can be, but the overall benefits which can accrue.

Question 3.

This takes us in the opposite direction, but one which might protect the investment of the current fleet in their canoes. It may reduce costs in the longer term and ensure the quality of the racing. It would restrict scope for innovation and design. It would give us a chance to distil the essential features of the IC, simplify the rules and at some specified future date fix a specific one-design concept. This would require new moulds and tooling and an International moulds licensing system and so would require considerable initial investment. This option might eventually prove attractive to new sailors who could buy into a known quantity at a lower price? Or will the current spate of factory one designs soon lead to a jading of the market's appetite for OD boats?

Question 4.

Assuming that we can gain a consensus on what type of class we want to be then we need to look at how we can move towards it. Question 4 is complex and might take a while to answer! It is difficult to give an entirely balanced view, but I would offer the following, purely personal, observations.

- We could look to delete certain rules which have no empirical foundation e.g. the forestay height rule which looks pretty redundant and the main/jib ratio rule also seems pretty arbitrary. If people wanted to try a 7/8 or masthead rig, or a una rig with a 10 sq M. main why not? Should we permit this provided it can be rigged on an existing canoe without requiring it to be permanently modified out of class? We have to accept that with the ICA the bow has been modified out of IC rules and it was given a dispensation retrospectively. We need to acknowledge that this has caused some real indignation, but it has proved to have been the right pragmatic move in the longer term. But let's try to avoid a repetition!
- We could allow for considerable experimentation within a "30 minutes in the dinghy park" type rule. This would require the approval of *local clubs and fleets* for modified boats racing alongside ICs. This would permit any change, provided that a modified IC could revert back to full class status in this kind of time span using a basic tool kit, e.g. the ICA can race as a legal IC by not flying the kite; a longer mast or sliding seat could be tried etc. etc.....
- If we play around with increasing the white sail area, mast height, seat extension etc., we stand a chance of moving the optimum we have now towards one which favours lighter/heavier sailors or more specific wind and sea states. Racing under a "30 minute rule" would allow this to be assessed.

- In order to manage the process of evolution it would seem sensible that all major championships should continue to be held in standard ICs, as at present. The ICAs are generally happy to sail in their own series, as they did at the Bristol Worlds, (although they are fast gaining numbers around the world which could allow them to attain the full International standard by 2005 and hence their own ICF recognised World Championship). The principle of a separate fleet for experimental/historic/National rules canoes at championships could be extended. At club level canoes could still race as ICs within a "30 minute rig rule" *with local approval*, so the dangers of obsolescence and loss of current investment could be averted. By allowing experimental canoes and standards and ICAs to race together at club level (current UK practice) the actual benefits can be observed and tested prior to any permanent legislation that might be required (and its more fun!).

Question 5

Do we need a "30 minute" rule? Presumably anyone can do what they like with their own boat! The idea is to allow temporarily modified boats to race at *local level* in order to gain evidence and data, but at the same time to impose a practical boundary to discourage owners from more extreme modifications which may be irreversible.

Questions 6 & 7.

The last questions are really to try to find out what are the key attractions that bring sailors into the canoe fleet and keep us here! Hopefully this will help us to focus our promotion efforts on those areas which are the most successful and effective.

Alan Powell
ICF Committee Jan 2003