

# Old master

470 world champion in 1990 and 1991 yet never an Olympic medal winner, Wolfgang Hunger is still regarded by many as one of the finest dinghy sailors of his generation. The speedy doctor has also just added a fourth 505 world title to his still-expanding curriculum vitae...

Wolfgang Hunger and Julien Kleiner dominated the SAP 505 world championships in Denmark at the beginning of August. Aarhus presented a very different challenge from last year's worlds, a brutally windy regatta in San Francisco Bay won by American powerhouses Mike Martin and Jeff Nelson.

Then again, the first day of this year's regatta was not unlike San Francisco, with a difficult chop and 25kt breezes gusting up to 30kt. Howie Hamlin, crewed by Andy Zinn, had to laugh at the fact that he was leading the regatta after day one, with two second places from the day. 'Back home against guys like Mike Martin I'm not considered fast in this stuff. We prefer the lighter breeze,' he said, although that first day would prove to be his best of the regatta. By the end of the week the 126-boat fleet had encountered everything from a flat calm to Force 6, and bright sunshine to thunder and lightning.

Although this was Kleiner's first 505 world title, it was Hunger's fourth. Of all of them Hunger said Aarhus presented the most all-round test of ability. The Germans were pushed hard by the Danish brothers of FD legend, Jorgen and Jacob Bojsen-Møller, and Ian Pinnell and Ian Mitchell from Great Britain, former world champions in the 505.

The two biggest weapons in Hunger's armoury were impressive downwind speed and an unmatched ability to recover from a bad first beat and climb from deep in the pack back into the top three. On the fourth day Hunger was complaining about his lack of upwind speed in light airs, yet his downwind speed and particularly his ability to make sense of seemingly random shifts got him back into contention every time.

Hunger is no stranger to success in small dinghies, having won the 470 worlds twice and gone to three successive Olympic Games as a medal favourite. Now in his 50s, Hunger is as sharp as ever, and even surprised himself at how well he had read the conditions in Aarhus. 'It was from watching things, the clouds, the other boats, but also from a feeling that I had, maybe an intuition,' says the orthopaedic doctor.

However, there is nothing particularly special or unusual about the equipment on Hunger's boat. It's a standard Rondar hull finished by his former 505 crew and German Rondar agent Holger Jess, with a Superspar rig supporting a set of Bojsen-Møller sails. At 78kg, Hunger reckoned himself to be one of the heavier helmsmen in the top 10, although the pair's all-up weight is reduced by the tall but lean Kleiner weighing just 84kg. This relatively light combined crew weight and excellent technique accounted for some exceptional downwind speed.



The other big factor in their success was a comprehensive training programme with fellow Germans Meike Schomaeker and Holger Jess, who finished fifth overall. At just 24, Schomaeker is half the age of Jess, who had won three 505 titles with Hunger, and Schomaeker's fifth place is the best result to date for a woman at a 505 world championship. Weighing just 60kg, with Jess 90kg, they were one of the lightest teams at the regatta but still very effective in the stronger winds. 'Most teams in the 505 are too heavy,' says Jess with his typical blunt honesty.

While a handful of crews are persevering with the twin-spreader rig used by Morgan Larson and Trevor Baylis to win the 2004 championships in Santa Cruz, the majority still use a single spreader rig. Some have the ability to alter pre-bend with sliding shroud tracks, but Hunger modestly claims that he doesn't really know what he's doing with these... Other leading teams don't bother with these systems at all, so it certainly does not rank as a 'must-have' accessory.

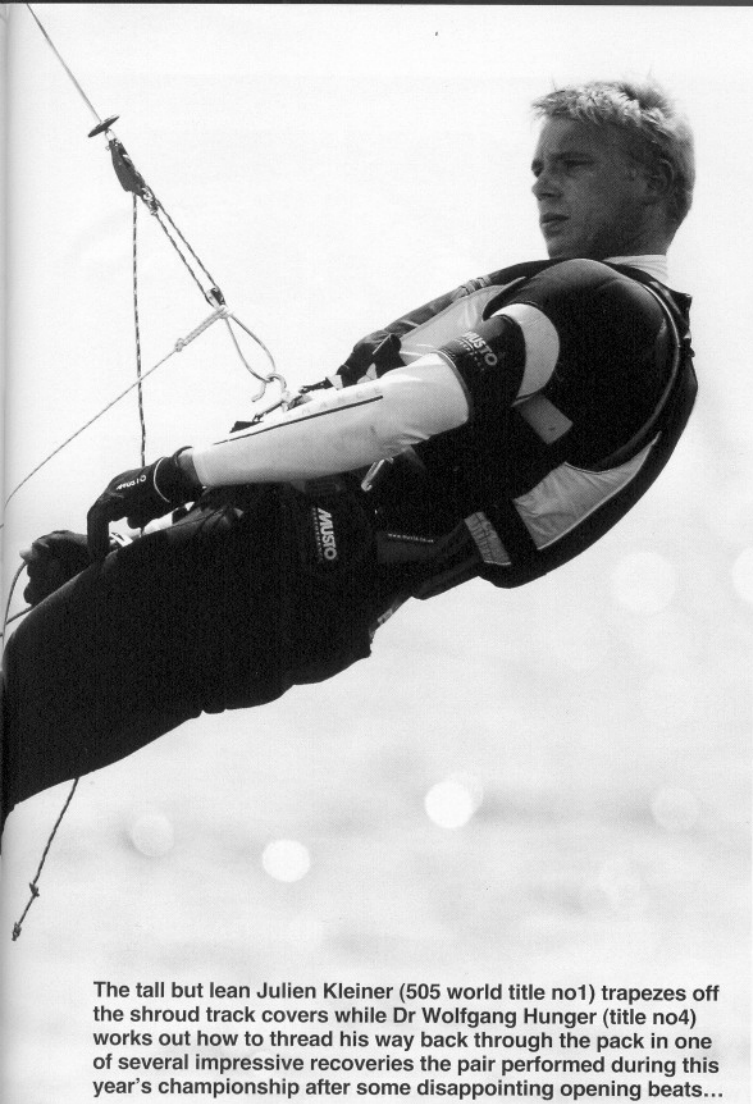
One 'must-have' that everyone is using these days is the gybing centreboard, though Hunger and a few others have the additional adjustment of a removable pin to allow them to raise the board slightly along the vertical axis in heavy air. This reduces the lateral resistance of the foil without affecting the fore-and-aft centre of effort.

The most noticeable differences between the top boats are in cockpit layout. Whereas Hunger and most of the German fleet prefer to use a 4:1 central mainsheet system with a square-topped hoop and a short traveller, other leading lights such as Pinnell and Hamlin employ simple up-and-over transom sheeting.

For controlling the jib sheeting Pinnell has some beautifully shaped Harken tracks to give him precise positioning, while German crews tend to use a floating block and tackle which Pinnell reckons must be a nightmare to calibrate. Hamlin has no ability whatsoever to inhaul the jib from the side tanks – which suggests that maybe jib sheeting position is not that critical after all!

Twin spinnaker poles are a recent innovation that has been widely adopted. They make it much easier for the crew to get the

MICK ANDERSON



The tall but lean Julien Kleiner (505 world title no1) trapezes off the shroud track covers while Dr Wolfgang Hunger (title no4) works out how to thread his way back through the pack in one of several impressive recoveries the pair performed during this year's championship after some disappointing opening beats...

spinnaker set after a hoist or a gybe without having to fiddle around trying to locate the guy in the end of the pole. Hunger uses the system, although the Bojsen-Møllers have a traditional double-ended pole such as you would see on a 470, while third-placed Pinnell and Mitchell still use the single-ended poll that has been the class standard for some 20 or 30 years.

At the class AGM during the worlds a submission to get rid of the twin poles was rejected, as was a move to remove the reaching legs and race just windward-leeward courses. A proposal to discuss the introduction of carbon masts was also postponed for another two years; for a class that first played with carbon rigs 30 years ago, this seems a surprisingly conservative decision but even Howie Hamlin – with all his experience of carbon-rigged 18ft skiffs – believes it is the right one at the moment.

A rigged aluminium 505 mast costs around US\$1,600, and a realistic estimate for a mass-produced carbon alternative would be no less than \$3,200, quite possibly more. While Hamlin is one 505 sailor for whom the additional cost would not be a problem, he doesn't believe that a carbon rig would significantly enhance either performance or the enjoyment of sailing the boat.

With a new, ready-to-race 505 already costing anywhere from \$28,000 to \$36,000, it's understandable that sailors don't want to get caught in a new arms race.

It's a testament to the perennial appeal of the 505 that so many of the sailors have been racing them for more than half their lives. The Bojsen-Møllers first competed for the world title in Copenhagen 32 years ago, when nerves got the better of the young brothers and they finished second to Britain's Peter Colclough and Phil Brown after capsizing in the windy final race. Jorgen Bojsen-Møller went on to win gold and bronze Olympic medals in the Flying Dutchman, and with his brother has won countless Danish and European 505 titles, yet still the 505 world title eludes them. Howie Hamlin, who with Andy Zinn came fourth this year, has taken part in all but two of the past 30 world championships – including victory in 1999... as well as finishing runner-up seven times.

The big challenge for the fleet is to attract new blood. With ▶



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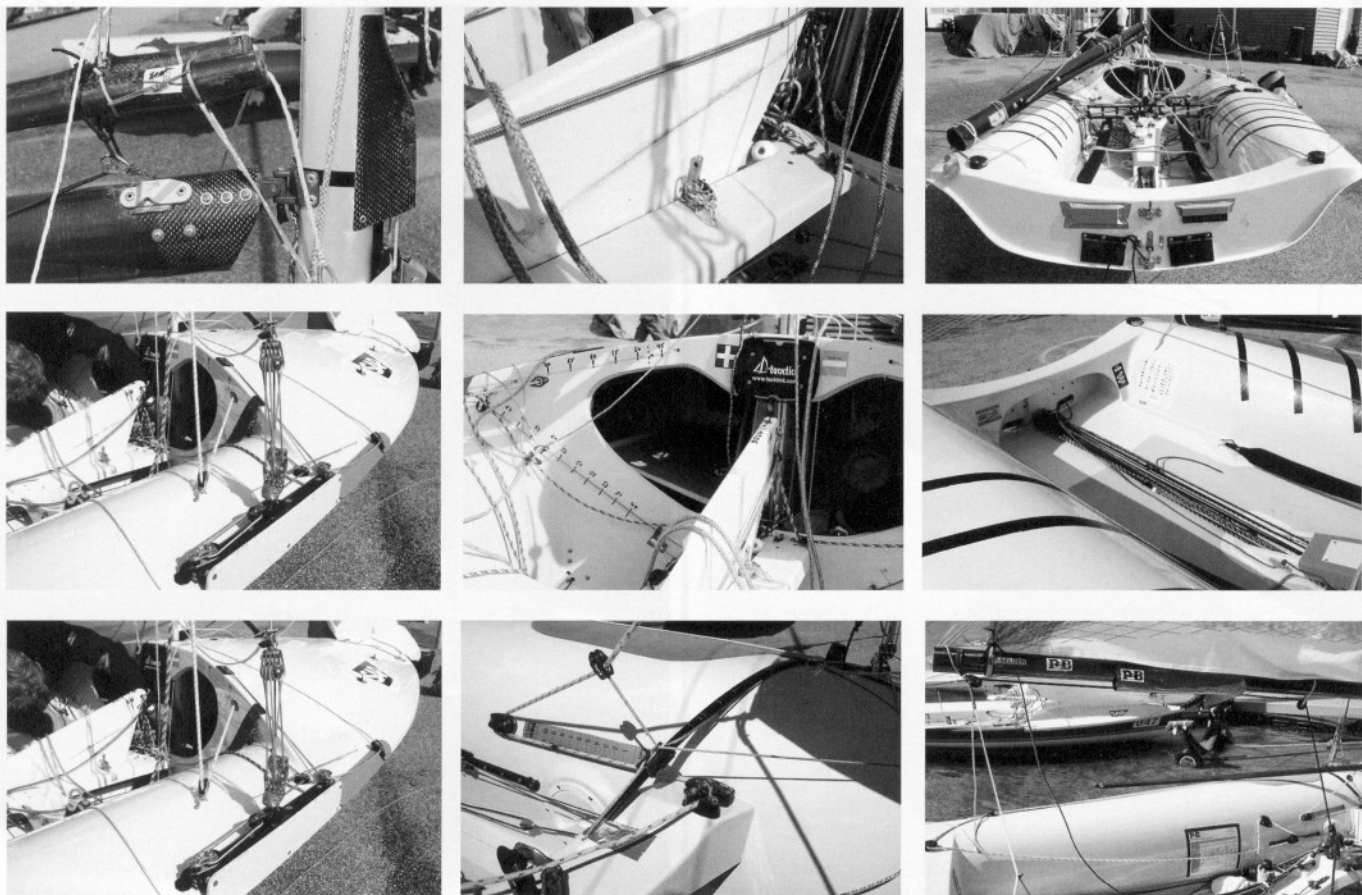
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**Top two rows:** this well-calibrated but not over-complex Rondar platform, great offwind speed and seven days of outstanding regatta sailing delivered another 505 title to Wolfgang Hunger and his crew Julian Kleiner. Perhaps not unrelated to being among the lighter crews, Hunger's boat features this second higher pivot pin (*top centre*) which allows his gybing centreboard (universal in this fleet) to be lifted vertically upwind in big breeze. Note also the trapezing foot-plates over the shroud tracks (*centre left*). Former champion Ian Pinnell (*bottom row*) uses this elegant curved jib car adjuster (*centre*) and prefers transom sheeting (*right*) to Hunger's centre-sheeting

hulls lasting 10 years or more without any noticeable deterioration in performance, second-hand prices remain high. This is great for the incumbent owner, but it does make it harder for people to take that initial step into the class.

However, if you are wondering whether or not to join the 505 fleet, then maybe the venues for the next three 505 world championships bear scrutiny. Next March the 2011 worlds will take place at Hamilton Island, the exclusive Australian island resort owned by Bob Oatley. The year afterwards it's La Rochelle, and in 2013 the fleet is heading to Barbados, where the Fireballs enjoyed such a successful world championship earlier this year.

The 505 fleet also continues to enjoy strong support from SAP, the global software giant co-founded by keen 505 sailor Hasso Plattner, who seems to prefer racing his 5m dinghy to the multi-million-pound Maxi yachts for which he is perhaps better known. And far from being a passive sponsor writing blank cheques to the class, SAP use the 505 championship as a means to test and demonstrate the ability of their software to crunch through reams of data from the racecourse, with GPS units fitted to every boat. A direct benefit for sailors is that they can then identify who was fastest on any leg, who had the best VMG, and so on.

This year's regatta also gave local organisers Sailing Aarhus an opportunity to experiment with their real-time online coverage. The organisers worked closely with the Active Institute (of the University of Aarhus) to create an event website that would draw together various media tools that are already either freely available or could be cheaply acquired. Pulling together different strands such as live streaming video and audio commentary from the water, Twitter feeds from observers on the racecourse, along with GPS tracking provided by TracTrac, this was the most followed 505 championship ever.

Thomas Capitani from Sailing Aarhus said visits to the website included more than 37,000 unique viewers registering more than 125,000 page views, with each visit averaging 5m 24s. 'In television terms that is extremely sizable, equating to an entire

extended commercial break,' says Capitani. 'But what's even more important is that this many people are spending more than five minutes at a time, watching and getting excited about sailing... In Aarhus we have shown that with a relatively simple set-up, and with cheap equipment, you can still do a great media job. And you can achieve high numbers in terms of worldwide coverage.'

Just as Aarhus's previous extensive use of GPS tracking at the Youth Worlds two years ago led to much wider uptake of tracking technology in sailing, Capitani hopes the 505 'mashup' experiment will inspire others to take on similar projects: 'We are doing it again this summer for the Danish national youth championships, with 500 boats on five racecourses and next year we plan to do a similar job for the A-Class Cat worlds.'

Capitani is keen to emphasise that this is not a closed, proprietary project, but an open-source experiment that he hopes will encourage other regatta organisers and class associations to attempt similar ventures into new media. 'What we did this week can be done anywhere, although we're very fortunate to have a number of things working very well for us here.'

'We have 3G mobile coverage across all our racecourses; we have strong partnerships with small companies such as Stream-Factory and TracTrac, and the support of the Active Institute from the university plus a city that wants to attract sailing events here on an ongoing basis. But what we don't want to say is that what we did at the 505 worlds is the definitive way to do things; rather, this has been an experiment in bringing sailing to a wide audience using affordable means, and we would love it if other people take the "Aarhus model" and develop it further.'

The underlying aim of the Aarhus effort is to win the bid for the 2014 ISAF world championship, when all the Olympic classes compete on the same waters. Capitani also believes that his team's informed passion for new technology could chime well with the IOC's urgent and growing demands for sailing to increase its media appeal at the Olympic Games...

Andy Rice