

"...this boat is a crew's boat..." claims Philippe!

Philippe Jacot is the Swiss Class President. He kindly accepted to share with us his views on the fiveoh and other related matters in the following interview.

How long have you been sailing fiveoh, Philippe?

- I started to sail 505 in 1989. I remember my first regatta with the class. It was in Morges on the Lake of Geneva, in March the week-end before the Europa Cup in France took place. The water and air temperatures were around 5°C and we were about 65 boats on the starting line... In addition to the 35 Swiss boats there were 15-20 Frenchs, and the remaining were the Germans, the Danes and sometimes the Swedish who stopped in Morges on their way to the South of France.

You crew only, why don't you helm?

- I believe that 80 kg is a kind of upper limit to helming a 505 competitively, and it is a fact that I weight between 89 to 95 kg depending on the success of my diet program.... In fact, I started to helm in 1991 and I took part in the European championship in Kopenhagen. At the end of 1991, I started to sail with René Betschen. He was a bit too heavy as well (84kg) but we managed to be very fast upwind at times. However we always suffered a little bit downwind. I never got frustrated to be on the rail of the fiveho. I use to say that this boat is a crew's boat. An experimented crew can contribute a lot to solve the speed equation on this boat. His position on the wire is unique to sense the small differences in the boat settings and he can greatly contribute to the driving of the boat, especially in marginal trapeze conditions and downwind. For me, crewing on a 505 is a real enjoyment. However, I believe that it is very difficult to be a good crew without an extensive helming experience. That's why I still sail and compete a lot in the Laser class.

The Swiss class used to be real active in the past with fleets in Zurich, Geneva, Neuchâtel; and then only a few (real good) sailors were still sailing, what happened?

- Well, the Swiss Class nearly collapsed during 1999-2000 timeframe when most of the German speaking "locomotives" decided to shift to skiff classes such as the 49er or the RS600. They dragged along several other people on their move. The end result is that we rapidly reached an under-critical level of activities. It remained only one real island of serious sailors in Neuchâtel, located in the French speaking part of Switzerland. In 2002 we stopped all national level regattas, because the attendance was so low that we would have got more organizers on water than sailors...

Now is the activity getting any better?

- Yes slightly better. We have now a couple of new teams showing up. I believe that we will be around 12 to 15 Swiss boats at the next Swiss Open in October and I hope that we will be 5 to 6 Swiss boats in Sicilia in 2008.

As the recently appointed Swiss Class President, what is your plan for the coming seasons?

- Our first goal for the coming years is to re-build a competent fleet at international level. We believe that we will not attract new people if the existing teams are not competent and credible. Switzerland is small, and is located in the center of Europe. We will therefore focus on international championships with a small amount of national events. On the other side we have started some actions aiming at improving the performance of the existing base. For example, we have recently hired a professional coach and we are putting in place a program to prepare as well as possible the 2008 World Championship. By the way, this coach will be on the water during the Swiss Open in Neuchâtel in next October, and he will have the right to go very close of the competitors to watch and film actions. Each evening he will perform some critics to the entire fleet, including for foreign teams, of course.

We all know that you are very involved with Duvoisin boat construction. At the last year Swiss championship in Neuchâtel, you shared with us several new ideas with respect to boat construction, could you summarize what were they?

- Well, I believe that the Duvoisin brothers have been building over 45 boats since 1992, when René Betschen and I got the first of this serie. Last year Antony said to me that the moulds started to be tired and needed to be reworked. It was an opportunity to think about some changes. My helm, Florian Stauffer, and I have performed an analysis of the possible improvements that we could bring to the boat. We identified a couple of points that we proposed to the Duvoisin brothers. They started to modify and rework the moulds accordingly. We have reworked slightly the hull shape in order to extend the waterline by approximately 1.5 cm. We have also reworked the launcher to accommodate for the new forestay position on the deck as well as for the big kite. We also have reworked the cockpit to improve the mobility of the crew. We will also test some ideas regarding the so-called "hull dynamic response" but it is too early to speak about that for the time being.

Who will sail the first "new Duv"?

- Philippe Boite will get the first new boat. The program is taking more time than anticipated this winter due to difficulties in getting some row materials on time and due to the fact that one key employee suffered from epoxy allergy...

Unfortunately, Philippe's boat will not be ready for the Eurocup in St-Raphael. I hope he will be able to sail his new boat in Riva.

Will you soon get one of these new boats?

- There is no urgency. My boat is still ok and I believe that Duvoisin have some pending orders... I will see if I can take a slot to get a boat early enough to be ready for Sicilia. Otherwise I will plan one for 2009.

Many young sailors are keen to get in our class, what piece of advice would you give to a newcomer willing to crew well?



- The 505 is a quite complicated boat to sail. For me it is key for a newcomer to have access to the information and advices from established top teams. Young sailors have an incredible capability to sink the information and to apply them on the water. I presently sail myself with a very

young helmsman. I started with him in 2003 before he turned 18, so I can report how this kind of people can learn fast when they are motivated. So the new teams need to be exposed and need to find a "sponsor" who is willing to transmit to them the key points to apply. Then they need to work hard, to adapt their boat and way of sailing in order to culture at the best their potentialities.

With respect to our class and boat, how do you see the future and what should be done?

- This is a difficult question to answer without defining the strategy that we want for the class. These past years, we can see an increasing professionalism in the leading teams. The 505 seems to be more and more a class for relatively wealthy people, in the 30 to 55 years old range. Most of them could certainly afford a more expensive boat, but they have chosen the 505 in order to sail with a technical and exciting light boat requiring a low level of logistic. I definitely don't think that we can consider the 505 as a boat for everybody since its entry price for a new one is now around 25,000 Euros. On the other hand when we look at the results of the last Worlds in Australia, we can count a lot of old boats at the very top places. So it is a proven fact that it is not necessary to have a brand new boat to win. But this is necessary to get a good boat, even second-hand, to sail! So if the established teams never change their good boats for new ones, the young and "poor" newcomers have little chance to enter (and will not be there when they will get "rich"). From my point of view, we should keep the quality of the boat as it is, but we should prevent any kind of price increase like carbon spars, booms, etc.. If

we make changes, we should only accept things that simplify the construction. We should rather focus more on managing the image of the class in the media. Today we know that the events are more important than the support that is used for these events. For example we should include in the rules the right for organizers to install cameras and GPS transmitters on the top boats in order for them to better sell the event to sponsors. But this is just some thinking.

*Many thanks for your time, Philippe, and for all what you do for the class. Your views are really exciting and I wish you full success with what you're doing.
See you soon on the water*

Interviewed by Jean-Baptiste DUPONT