



Meeting started for 8:05pm CST . 8:35pm EST 13th of November, 2024

Present

John Heywood
Myles Gavin (for 2nd half of meeting)
Ben Schulz
Nick Gunner
Chris Payne
Heather Macfarlane
Glenn Peverell
Nathan Stockley
Mark Jarred
Peter Sinclair
Peter Moor
Jaemie Wilson
Andrew Kean
Ben Garner

Apologies

Kevin Luff

Opening discussions:

- Our Commodore, John Heywood welcomed participants.
- Given the criticality of the topic this meeting was held instead of the normal AGM
- He passed the floor to Heather Macfarlane as Rear Commodore to provide context from FI for the meeting.

Rear Commodore Opening remarks

- The intention of Fireball International is to make changes to the Fireball Rule to make the class more attractive to a wider range of sailors and easier to build WITHOUT changing the fundamental nature or performance of the class.

- It is important to remember that intention. Where the rule proposals that we will discuss today may or may not change performance, remember the intention is NOT to change performance
- Process: As an NCA we submit 1 vote; so as members we need to reach a decision as to how our NCA will vote.
- If you recall the sailors open forum meeting at Geelong the Commodore presented stats showing the decline in fireball boat building that has been a trend across 20 years, with marked decline in recent years.
- These rule changes are just one part of a 5 steps in the strategic pathway to attempt to grow the Fireball Class. The 5 steps are:
 - Marketing
 - Welcome (1st contact often at club level)
 - Boat purchase (availability and help to set them up)
 - Training and Improvement
 - Events - for all, not just for top few
- In the interests of getting through the meeting please let's all keep our comments as succinct as possible.

Member Discussion

- Proposal 1: allow angled bevels on the inside side deck corners:
The lip in current boats can be used to help get back into the boat. Could there be indented grab spots or similar to provide assistance without creating an additional mould?
- Proposals 2, 5: 2 - flatten the side decks slightly; 5 - integrate and recess jib sheet cleats to cockpit sides
These changes should not be introduced into the rules if they are not required. They are a builder's decision within the current rules.
- Proposals 3, 8, 9 and 10:
3: shorten the aft deck
8: allow larger drain tubes
9: allow carbon fibre to be used in the construction of the foils? The minimum weight of the foils will not change.
10: allow carbon in the hull and deck mouldings? The minimum weight of the boat will not change. The weight is largely determined by the laminate thickness rule, which will not change.

These proposals are the ones where there was most concern about actual / risk of performance improvements depending on how they are implemented, but it was acknowledged that proposal 8 (drain tubes) could be retrofitted.

- With respect to carbon for foils and hull there was strong feedback that the final wording of the rules should put limits on the type of carbon and the construction methods to prevent cost blow outs and an "arms race" to develop hulls that are significantly stiffer and lighter in the ends. Variations will depend on the laminate schedule, orientation of fibre, grade of carbon, weave (unidirectional, biaxial, double bias, woven?), manufacturing process (wet layup, vacuumed, autoclaved, prepreg, infusion?), etc. There is a world of difference between a timber centreboard with a layer of woven wet lay up carbon over the top and a prepreg carbon board cooked in pressure, like a Moth, GP 50 or AC 75 foil, with a laminate schedule designed by a composite engineer.
- Proposal 14: black band sail stopper: It was questioned whether this should be a rule requirement or education, but acknowledged that the people most likely to be caught out are less experienced fireballers not at the front of the fleet. People requested boat set up articles be published showing the best and cheapest ways to do either a halyard lock and or the stoppers so they don't damage the sails where they run into the stopper.

Further, for existing boats - is it fair to assume that if the current proposals are passed, will older existing boats be allowed to be modified to the new rules?

The altered boat would, of course, be subject to re measurement and weighing.

And would any repairs or modifications in future be allowed to be made using Carbon?

Summary: Australia votes Yes to the proposals, but there is a belief some of these changes will affect performance.

It was agreed Australia should provide feedback about what we would like to see as follow up and incorporated into actual rule changes to minimise the perceptions and risk that older boats will be less competitive than the new ones.

GP: Fireballs are being considered for inclusion as an Australian Sailing Pathway boat.

NG: Request formal briefing for measurers of changes

ACTION: HM to complete questionnaire without submitting and send to IFAA for ratification before submitting

Meeting closed 10:10pm, CST