

Basic Detail Report



Estrellita

Vessel number

HV000200

Date

1951

Primary Maker

Don Piper (1920-1985)

Description

The 12-foot skiff ESTRELLITA was designed and built by Don Piper in Brisbane. The hull is cedar planked with seam-batten construction. The design was a narrower version of the typical 12-foot skiffs of the time, based on a Darling Point 10-footer called CHANCE also designed by Piper. His designs gained attention from the sailing fraternity as they differed in design from other skiffs competing at the time. Newspaper articles in 1950/51

refer to the new look of Don Piper's designs, with lighter wood and narrower beam measurement among other refinements. ESTRELLITA's design was referred to as "revolutionary" and proved itself with early victories upon debut in racing. An article in the Sunday Mail 10 Jan 1952 referred to ESTRELLITA as the "salvation of 12 foot skiffs" noting that..."two hundred pounds could be saved by building "a little champion" instead of the orthodox 12 as raced over 28 years. Piper proved that he could build a small streamlined hull, six to eight inches narrower than the previous champions craft, that could pace it with the best. With a streamlined hull, sails 40 per cent smaller would attain the desired results." The 12-foot skiffs were smaller versions of the famous 18-foot skiffs, with few restrictions on their dimensions other than the overall length - 12 feet (3.65m). They shared unrestricted oversized sailplans, cramming three or four crew aboard. ESTRELLITA was launched for the 1951/52 sailing season. The boat was owned by Bill Dickenson, and skippered by sailmaker H. 'Chick' Ware from Paul and Grey Ltd in Brisbane. Ron Beattie was sheet hand and Jack Drake forward hand. The skiff made history that season winning a hard fought series to take the national title. Seacraft magazine carried the following report in January 1952:

"Queensland's diminutive ESTRELLITA, skippered by 'Chick' Ware, captured the Australian 12-foot Skiff Championship on the Brisbane River over Christmas/New Year. "Ware's craft makes history in that she is the first of the experimental small breed ever to win a national title. Her performance is all the more amazing in that she is a new boat, launched only this season ... Although sporting less than half the working sail area of her top notch rivals, the narrow-beamer was driven hard by her three-man crew, and made up for slightly inferior windward ability by outstanding downwind dashes against fierce ebb tides." It was a close three-race series and capsizes by rivals RESOLVE and NSW boat AJAX put them behind

ESTRELLITA overall. Seacraft opened its report with the following summary: "SMALL '12' TRIUMPHS, Most experts thought the big-gearred skiffs would eat their baby rival, but ESTRELLITA proved more than a mouthful in a fierce three heat battle for the title." Much of the credit appears to belong to Ware who had persisted with the concept after a promising experience the previous season with another small 12-foot skiff MYOLA. By the end of that season Ware was said to be 'the pick of the bunch'. Seacraft reported in June 1951: "He has placed an order for a similar craft for next season. Small sails and three crew is Ware's slogan. He contends it is better to sail over the water than drive through it." Other designers tried smaller 12s as well. MYOLA from 1950, which later in the season was called JANE was designed by Jack McLeer Snr in Brisbane. In Sydney Ken Minter had built JOAN V in 1949, while Alan Payne was designing small 12s at the same time. One of Payne's designs for Malcolm Anderson in Sydney went to Brisbane at about this time for Ware to make the sails. It is understood Ware showed great interest in the design of the hull, which was even narrower than ESTRELLITA. In 2008 the hull and spars are still in good original condition, and the recently re-rigged hull is on display at the Queensland Maritime Museum. Prepared from research material supplied by Queensland Maritime Museum

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 3.66 m x 3.66 m x 1.3 m (12 ft x 12 ft x 4.25 ft)