

# STREAKER



Jack Holt's Streaker was originally designed for home-building, but new FRP models gave the class a fresh lease of life. **Jeremy Evans** took Rooster's new Streaker out for a trial.

**T**he Streaker was launched towards the end of Jack Holt's dinghy design career, 30 years after his first Merlin Rocket in 1945. It also signalled the culmination of the home-build movement, which Jack had started by producing GP14 kits in 1950. Other famous Holt designs include the Cadet (1947), Enterprise and Solo (1956) and Mirror (1963), all featuring chined plywood construction so that DIY enthusiasts on a budget could enjoy dinghy ownership in the harsh post-war climate.

But by the time the Streaker appeared, home-building was in rapid decline, prompted by a new generation of dinghy sailors who preferred to buy ready built plastic boats. Nevertheless, the new Holt singlehander was very popular for the first few years, with early plywood Streakers accounting for many of the sail numbers which are now close to 1,600 boats. Like many other classes, sales of the Streaker then went flat, which

eventually prompted the development of FRP (fibreglass reinforced plastic) and composite boats in 1998. Four years later the class association was able to take over copyright, technical control and ownership of the FRP moulds from Jack Holt (Designs) Ltd, enabling them to plan the resurgence of the class. A leap in national championship attendance from 23 boats in 2003 to 45 boats in 2004 indicates that they are clearly on track.

Licensed builders currently include Ron Beasley, who supplies the latest generation of marine ply self-build kits, Butler Boats, which builds Streakers in FRP with a choice of glass or plywood decks, and most recently Rooster who launched their new Streaker for the first time at the 2004 nationals and promptly dominated the event and all subsequent meetings which they've attended. The Rooster pedigree is a strong one. Steve Cockerill, who runs Rooster, raced the Europe with

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TEST



**Right** The distinctive Holt chined shape is still there, but softened with the new hull.



PHOTO: KEVIN FRY

enthusiasm, has won the Laser Radial Masters worlds plus the Blaze and RS300 national championships, and all in all is a singlehanded dinghy racing guru. He liked the look of the Streaker, talked to the class and felt he could produce the quickest plastic boat available.

It took three attempts. The first epoxy Streaker prototype was too heavy, the second too fragile and the third - which won the national championships - just right. By that stage they had decided to change to isophthalic polyester sandwich construction with foam core throughout hull, deck and floors to produce the lightest, stiffest and strongest boat. Steve says that building a Streaker to the class minimum of 48kg is not easy, since the class was originally designed for plywood. Any doubts as to the strength of the Rooster Streaker can, however, be laid to rest by watching Steve's sailing style - bouncy and aggressive with non-stop body movement that's perfect for showing up any weakness when developing a new boat!

### Rigging up

For this test we were lucky - a perfect dinghy day! Light winds in the lee of the land and honking breeze on open water with some strong spring sun as an extra bonus. The Streaker arrived on a Laser combi trolley and trailer which provides the cheapest option for a similar size boat.

Unfortunately the trolley cradle was not a perfect fit, allowing the Streaker to wobble in the gusts while rigging. Steve explained that the cradle had been made 2cm too short and suggested adjustable side straps as a useful extra.

Rigging might take you 15 minutes. The Streaker is delightfully light which makes it very easy to handle. It's really easy to lift the Holt one-design mast and drop the foot into the foredeck hole, then attach forestay and shrouds. On a windy day, this part of the operation struck me as considerably more user-friendly than coping with a fairly heavy Laser mast and sail.

The sailmaker choice is open for the Streaker. This one had a stylish Red Eye with see-through laminate panels. With no pre-bend, the bolt rope slides straight up the luff slot with the halyard locked off at the mast top, which is as easy as you can make this operation. Sail controls are straightforward, using Spectra lines for cunningham, outhaul and kicker which are all neatly led to the side decks. Steve is considering a couple of improvements in this department. First, he'd like continuous control lines for the kicker and cunningham. Second, he's sick of control lines that run out on the wrong side of the boat because they're not secure in their camcleats. He advocates a return to simple V-jammers, which will catch and hold a runaway line, but fears customers might consider them 'cheap.' Steve would also like to see dinghy control lines with a standard colour coding for all classes - kicker in red, cunningham in blue, etc. Steve is in fact something of a line expert, having developed the Polilite non-twisting mainsheet as pulled by gold medal sailors in the last two Olympics and also fitted to the Streaker.

On the slipway, the Streaker certainly looks stylish. You barely notice this plastic boat still has chines, which were designed for plywood construction, since the soft lines of the hull bear little comparison with the earlier series of Jack Holt hard chine shapes such as the Cadet and Mirror.

Finishing touches include fine laminated wood daggerboard and rudder foils, with the Dotan kick-

**Below** The wood laminate rudder has a kick-up system with three positions: slipway, shallow water and sailing.







up rudder system which looks like an awesome bit of kit, providing three positions (slipway, shallow water, down) with a shake of the carbon tiller.

## Sailing

The Streaker is lighter than most similarly sized dinghies, and with the breeze up you don't want to leave it unattended when the sail is hoisted. Steve went for it in his normal style for the photos: loads of movement, lots of action and clear acceleration.

A steady breeze building to the top end of Force 4 across flat water made for great sailing, as we swapped roles. Despite being light, the Streaker is stable when you get on board and there's no obvious flex in the floor or side decks. The cockpit has loads of room and is comfortable for hiking with carefully angled side-decks, a deep footwell and padded Rooster straps helping to lift your bum off the water. Forget the hard-core misery of driving a Laser to windward in a blow, by comparison the Streaker is a breeze.

Like any boat you need to sail it flat, but if the Streaker heels, things don't go particularly pear-shaped. The tiller felt neutral – fine for me, though Steve would prefer more bite. No problem, since you can adjust the fully-down angle of the blade with the Dotan system. With a much higher boom than a Laser and space to move around in the cockpit, tacking should also be a doddle.

Some dinghies are a bit gnarly when you bear off in a breeze, not the Streaker. It's easy to let the mainsheet run, hold the boat flat and feel like you are in full control. The acceleration is great and really makes this boat live up to its name – light and lively with lots of easily controlled fun. It's also rare to find a boat that seems so easy to gybe on first acquaintance in a fresh wind – it went through the turns without losing much speed, staying easy to hold the boat flat and choose your new course when the boom comes across. Steve compared it to carving gybes on a windsurf board, it's not quite the same thing, but you get that feeling.

I did capsize, just to see how it felt. A sealed mast gives a good chance of the Streaker floating



on its side rather than inverting. Like all modern boats, the hull floats quite high with so much volume in the sides. I had no problem flipping it up by pulling on the end of the daggerboard, but Steve will fit righting lines under the gunwales for those who want them. Once upright, it seemed easy and stable to scramble over the windward side and start sailing.

We had no real waves to contend with, which could change the complexion of things. To get a feel for what might happen, we drove the Streaker hard into wash being kicked up by the RIB. On one occasion the bows went down. This used to be a Streaker problem, flooding the open cockpit. However, all modern Streakers, including the Rooster, have a double bottom in the forward control half. Apart from stiffening the boat, this ensures that any rush of water cascades straight down into the aft cockpit where it's immediately sucked-out by two efficient bailers. No obvious problems there. Meanwhile in the lee of the land, the Streaker continued to feel like a boat that's light, sensitive and fun to sail.

**Above left** The boat is very well-behaved in the gybes, losing little speed through the turns.

**Top** Upwind the rudder felt nice and neutral.

**Above** The cockpit is comfortable for hiking with angled side-decks, a deep footwell and padded toestraps.

**Left** The Streaker has great acceleration through the bear away, but is easily controllable.

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Right The Streaker could appeal to older sailors who want something that requires less grunt than a Laser.



PHOTO: JIMMY EVANS

## Overall

The class association recommends a crew weight of around 63-83kg (10-13 stone) for the Streaker, which sounds about right with somewhere in the middle optimum for all conditions. There's just one problem: there are a lot of singlehanders out there, so where does the Streaker fit in? It could be ideal for older sailors who feel past the grunt required to perform in a Laser, but want a dinghy with its own clear identity that is lighter and more sensitive than a Radial, more zippy and easier to sail than a Solo, less tippy and a bigger weight carrier than a Byte CII.

There is not a great deal of response in that Streaker rig with its one-design spars. But a Streaker with a CII type auto-response rig could be a brilliant move to really set it apart from the pack. Whether the class would want to indulge in the knowledge building and fiddling required to manage such a rig is another matter. As the Streaker stands they have a good fun machine that is forgiving and rewarding to sail, with the Rooster version currently at the top of the pack.

Thanks to Cobnor Activities Centre (CAC) for providing facilities for this test. CAC runs a full programme of residential and non-residential sailing courses and activities in Chichester harbour. For details visit [www.cact.co.uk](http://www.cact.co.uk)

## ANSWER BACK

from Steve Cockerill at Rooster Sailing

It appears that Jeremy enjoyed his sail in the Streaker. I would argue that Jack Holt definitely saved his best design to last. Sailing a Streaker is an infectious disease – once you have tried it, nothing else quite hits the spot. I was personally very surprised at the level of fun the boat offers, perhaps it was the experience of being back in a boat where I weigh more than it does, making it very responsive to waves and body movement. I got a real kick out of bearing away a few degrees and really feeling the acceleration. You could describe the boat as rather like a cross between a Europe for lightness and a Solo for stability and comfort.

Jeremy's idea of trying the CII rig on the Streaker might be something worth exploring in the future, but I think that the class already has a strong following which is keen to keep the current rig as it is cheap, reliable and popular.

I can't wait for the class's national championship where it is reported that we may have Paul Goodison sailing his Dad's boat together with Alan Gillard (former Enterprise world champion), Ian Jones (last year's national champion and Northern Laser Circuit champion), so winning won't be a stroll in the park for anyone...

## SPECIFICATION Streaker

DESIGN:	Jack Holt in 1975
LENGTH:	3.75m
HULL WEIGHT:	48kg
SAIL AREA:	6.5sq m
LATEST PN:	1162
PRICE :	£4,495

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## THE OPPOSITION... Where does the Streaker fit in? Here are a couple of alternatives...



### SOLO

Jack Holt's best known singlehander, available in marine ply, FRP or composite options with a dedicated and enthusiastic class providing racing at home and abroad.

LOA:	3.78m
BEAM:	1.55m
HULL WEIGHT:	70kg
SAIL AREA:	8.36sq m
LATEST PN	1155
GUIDE PRICE:	£6,500*



### LASER RADIAL

Laser dinghy with smaller, more forgiving rig than standard. RYA youth class for 54-70kg weight range and new women's Olympic class for 2008.

LOA:	4.23m
BEAM:	1.37m
HULL WEIGHT:	60kg
SAIL AREA:	5.76sq m
LATEST PN	1101
GUIDE PRICE:	From £3,850