



In just 10 years, the Weta has gone from a one-off trimaran for family sailing and casual racing to being selected for the Masters Games.

When Roger Kitchen decided to build the first Weta sailing catamaran in 2004, he wanted a boat that did everything. As a family man, he wanted something that he could take his kids out in or go racing by himself, but it had to be easy to set up by one person, and still pack down small on a trailer. Ten years and 1000 boats later, big changes are happening at Weta Marine.

New Zealand is booked as the host country for the 2017 Masters' Games – essentially the Olympics for the over-35s and hosting more athletes than the Olympics. The Weta now joins the Laser in the competing classes – a significant development for the 4.4m trimaran.

“Being selected for the Masters Games is obviously big for us,” says Kitchen. “One of the exciting things is that we have

Weta Marine organises rallies for sailors to come together for sailing and coaching.

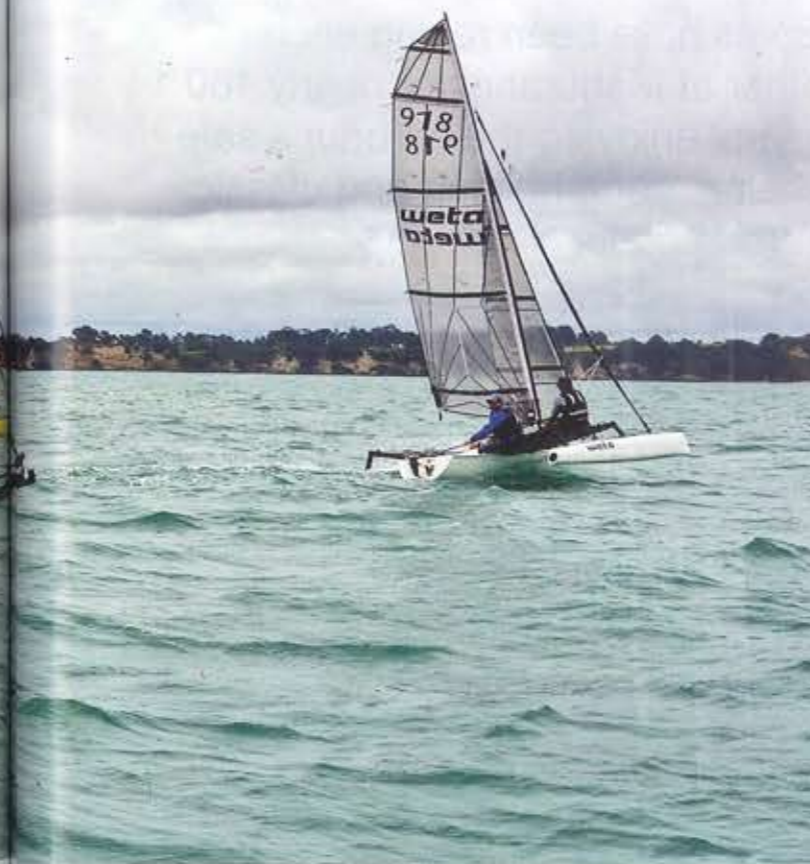


been given the freedom to decide on the format of the racing. At the moment, there isn't anything to say we have to do a set of windward-leeward. So we are experimenting a bit at the moment and trying out some courses for passage races that we might look to incorporate.”

Last year Weta popped its 1000th boat off the moulds in its factory in China and moved production to Indonesia.

Multihull MOVERS

Words by Ben Gladwell Photos by Weta Marine



“One of the main reasons we moved from the old production centre was to improve the quality,” says Kitchen. “The old yard in China had problems with retaining staff; there was no loyalty there, so you'd go and train a whole lot of guys up on how to build the boats, and then a couple of months later they'd be gone. Having new staff the whole time really affects the quality of your build. The yard in Indonesia is much better. It's a very good manufacturing plant; they do a lot of the Olympic class boats like 470s.”

When they moved to the new plant, Kitchen decided to build a new set of moulds and to update the boat.

“The old moulds were really only designed to produce four or five boats, and we got 1000 out of them. The new ones are a bit of an update on the design, but it's not so significant that it makes the old boats redundant or not competitive in racing. The only people that would notice the difference are those who have spent a lot of time in the first boat.”

With the new design, Kitchen is hoping to grow the class here in New Zealand. He runs a series of destination rallies in which groups of Weta sailors sail to an island or round a course, with small sprint races and coaching along the way. The growth of the class is essential to getting selected for events like the Masters Games, raising the profile of Kiwi sailing and design. ■

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