



OFFSHORE ONE DESIGN

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER – NOVEMBER 2011

17th November 2011

Dear Fellow Class Association Members,

As I indicated in my letter last month, the committee has been involved in extensive discussions with Elvstrom Sails UK – the current formal title for what was until recently known to us as Elvstrom Sobstad. For brevity I shall refer to the company as ES UK.

We started off in July, addressing issues raised at the AGM in Bangor in June. Along the way we have touched on many more topics related to sails; and we have had input on pricing from ES UK who have been unhappy with the profit margin they have been making. The initial prices proposed for this year's Winter Offer were totally unacceptable, and we considered a 3 year staging of any increases. Although such an arrangement was offered by ES UK, we decided that this too was unacceptable given the length of the commitment we would be giving and the implicit price increases by the end of year 3 – this in a situation where sail durability and customer care were sensitive areas in which we required demonstrable improvements.

We sought input from other sailmakers on potential prices and in the time available we were able to determine that, while price increases were probably necessary, it was far from clear that those proposed by ES UK were "reasonable".

There is a spectrum of opinion within the class about one sailmaker versus the open market. There are also divided feelings about ES UK and about one or two of the alternative suppliers. But we cannot resolve the best way forward by an opinion poll, and the committee recognises that it needs to progress this important topic in an orderly and logical manner whilst still enabling owners to be able to buy sails this winter.

The net of all of the above is that we have finally agreed on a set of prices from ES UK on the basis of which we are continuing their role as Approved Class Sailmaker for 12 months. We have their agreement that, if they satisfy the other criteria which we are specifying such that we would be prepared to re-appoint them this time next year, the same prices would apply at that time. We have, however, advised ES UK that we will be initiating the full process of obtaining quotes from other suppliers such that any future agreement is fully subjected to the test of competitiveness. Any future change in sailmaking strategy would of course require to be validated with class association members.

The price list is being distributed with this newsletter. You may be concerned at the increases, but please be assured that these reflect substantial improvement on what was initially on offer. Note that the Winter Offer discount prices are **only** available to class association members, and orders **must** be placed via Jo Chugg who will liaise with ES UK. ES UK will contact members wishing to pay by credit card to obtain the necessary details directly. The closing date (with ES UK) for Winter Offer orders is 21st December, and so you should contact Jo at least a day or two before that, at the latest. Cheques sent to Jo should be made payable to Elvstrom Sails UK Ltd.

The additional requirements we are laying on ES UK, in agreeing this arrangement, are

- The inclusion of a scrim layer as part of the lay-up for all the fore-and-aft sails
- That ES UK will fit at least the stanchion anti-chafe patches provided "standard" dimensions apply (which we are currently determining by measuring boats)
- Focus by ES UK on customer care, including responsiveness to any buyers' concerns
- Attention to detail by ES UK in respect of ancillary items such as sailbags

We have obtained specifications from ES UK which enable us to re-draft the Class Measurement Rules relating to sails. All the relevant rule changes are also being distributed with this newsletter.

As previously intimated, we are also seeking your approval via postal vote for the adoption of the new #3 Genoa. Given the high preponderance of class association members receiving communications via email, we will also accept votes by email on the same basis as postal votes – one vote per member. Votes must be received within 2 weeks of the issue of this notice – i.e. by Friday 2nd December – and should be sent to Jo Chugg. The final sheet of the accompanying document on sails clarifies voting details.

ES UK have advised us that they have now obtained certification as a fully ISAF-compliant sail measurer. As our sails are supposed to be provided measured and stamped (but have not always been so), this development represents one more tangible bit of progress.

I owe my thanks to all of the committee members for their patience in working through this complex set of problems. As a group we are satisfied with the outcome, though we recognise that there is no cause for euphoria. It is very much a compromise.

The Sigma 33 website service has essentially returned to normal, and my thanks to Dominic White for his efforts to resolve the problems. Dominic will hopefully be providing me with a “Chairman’s Chat” slot on the website shortly, but as a short-term expedient I have dived into the social networking pond and you can reach me via the website Facebook link. Additionally, my email address is damclaren@yahoo.com and my phone numbers are 01436-674097 and 07831-546224, should you wish to contact me more directly.

I declare a preference for distributing material like this via PDF files since these are “platform independent” and so do not require recipients to have Word (or even Windows) in order to read them. Jo Chugg is aware of a few members who do not find PDFs convenient, and I am interested in your feedback on this so that we can find the correct balance.

I am now looking forward to a little more spare time in which to attack the patches of dodgy antifouling on “Sigmatic’s” bottom!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donald McLaren". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Donald McLaren

Chairman