

British Finn Association



# SAIL A FINN

The most rewarding single-hander for Juniors, Olympic aspirants, Masters and now 'Classic with Carbon' sailors



PHOTO: ROBERT DEAVES/FINN CLASS

[Finnuk.org.uk](http://Finnuk.org.uk)

**Don't delay... sail a Finn today!**



PHOTO: ROBERT DEAVES/FINN CLASS

In recent years Great Britain has dominated the World Finn rankings, winning every Olympic Gold since Sydney 2000 and the Finn Gold Cup eleven times since 2002. But you don't have to be a World or Olympic champion to enjoy sailing the Finn, this rich heritage and easy access to the class expertise just makes it even more enjoyable to sail. What other sailboat offers the chance to race against world champions on Olympic venue courses and then share a beer together after racing?

Finn sailing isn't just for Olympic aspirants, there are just as many under 23's, indeed the bulk of the UK fleet are made up of Masters sailors. Each group have their own goals; U 23's have the Silver Cup – the Junior World Championship, Masters the World Masters that attracts 250-300 boats and the development squad a full calendar of international regattas in the best sailing venues worldwide.

Many of the world's top sailors served their apprenticeship in a Finn and all talk of the lifelong friendships and camaraderie the class is famous for.

The UK circuit boasts a very active race calendar, both inland and coastal with opportunities for training from British Sailing Team sailors and coaches plus opportunities for regattas abroad if you fancy.

The great UK heritage in Finn sailing means there is always a good supply of used boats and equipment available to get you started, with many club sailors buying sails and rigs cheaply from the Olympic team after just a couple of regattas use.

New Finns are being built in the UK by Petticrows and with Devoti, Hi-Tech and Pata built hulls well represented there is no shortage of competitive boats available at reasonable prices.

Put off by the heavyweight reputation of the boat? The modern Finn can in fact be sailed

competitively by 85-120kg sailors, with the optimum weight being around 96kg – but being tall does help! A wide range of long lasting carbon masts are available to suit various weights and by selecting the right depth of sail you can be competitive in most conditions. The boat is actually easier to sail in heavy winds than lighter hulls such as the Laser but still provides all the thrills blasting downwind and a some more!

A growing route in for sailors on tight budget is the 'Classic with Carbon' option. Any pre-1985 hull can now be raced at BFA events with a modern carbon rig, allowing hulls that cost less than £1000 to be super-charged with a second-hand modern rig to make the boat pretty competitive against the latest models. Post 1985 hulls hold their value remarkably well as the un-stayed rig causes little wear on the hull and 10 year old boats regularly win major championships.

To find out if the Finn is for you, contact one of our friendly fleet representatives at your nearest Finn club and try a boat for yourself. You will be assured of a warm welcome and plenty of advice as to what model of boat will best suit your budget and sailing ambitions.

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## Buying a Secondhand Finn

There are two routes to consider when buying a Finn dinghy:

- Classic boat (pre-1985)
- Modern race boat (1985 on)

Both types of Finn sailing have their devotees and there are plenty of individuals all over the UK who would support one or other type of Finn sailing. Restoring a classic boat can take time but can provide you with a beautiful boat for very little money. On the other hand a fully equipped race boat that will take you straight into top end racing is a fine machine that will also be the envy of many in the dinghy park. Whichever way you go people will stop and admire your new Finn.

## The Classic Finn

Classic Finns are identified as any boat built prior to 1985. They can be wood, GRP or a combination. The purists say a Classic Finn





should sail with an aluminum or wood mast and a Dacron sail but more recently the British Finn Association has embraced the growing trend for 'Classics with carbon' allowing pre-1985 boats to sail with modern rigs in order to make them more competitive. As a starting point, a budget of around £2,500 or so will get you a reasonable Vanguard or other GRP boat in a good sailing condition, if you can find one! At the time when they were the boat to have they were raced hard by the top guys for many years so some do look a bit tired but this should not put you off.

The suspicion is that many Finn hulls were built too stiff and needed to soften up, very different from other classes where the peak racing life is short. As a result, it is quite possible to get hold of a good boat that has been through several Olympic campaigns. If looks are important, you can strike it lucky with an immaculate hardly used glass boat. There are many manufacturers of GRP boats including Tiptree, Mader, Vanguard, Butler, Lanavere and Pata-Lemeux, all will probably need some work but will generally be sound hulls.

If you prefer a wooden boat some of the main manufacturers include Fairey Marine, Taylor, Morrison, Radaschall and Warwick. Many boats have been restored to beautiful pieces of furniture but the very stiff hulls make them less competitive than most glass boats in waves. You may be

able to pick up an old unrestored boat for a few hundred pounds but there will be much work to do, including allowing for a wider range of mast movement and loads of painting. Decks may also need replacing – this is especially the case with the older boats when the glues used to build them were not as good as those available today. Restoring an old classic boat can be great fun but may not get you out on the water very quickly!

Much more detail on classic boats can be found on the Forum of the website, where there is a register of the classic boats known to have been built in the UK.

## Modern Race Boats

In the United Kingdom the most commonly raced modern boats are made by Devoti, Petticrows, Pata, Hi-Tech and Wilke, with the Devoti and Petticrows being the most prevalent and available on the second-hand market. Devoti introduced the Fantastica hull shape in 2014 which has become the choice for most Olympic aspirants. Finns hold their value and are not cheap to buy new or secondhand. The second-hand market is buoyant but not well endowed with boats. On average, one boat a month appears on

the Finn class website forum and on other Finn supplier sites. However, it is rare for a boat to stay available for very long.

There is little to go wrong with a modern Finn, they are built solidly and do not have any commonly occurring defects that prevent a boat being competitive, (except for the nut on the end of the tiller!) Frequently on examining a modern Finn, you may find what appears to be extensive cracks on the foredeck along the gunwale. These are particularly noticeable on the clear-decked boats. These cracks are normal and an indication that the boat has light decks, the cracking is not structural and caused by the deck flexing but the hull not moving as the boat goes over waves.

Variations to the Finn hull shape are tightly controlled within the strict class rules. Builders work within small tolerances for most measurements, which often only allow plus or minus 5mm, consequently hull shapes vary very little. Pata boats from the mid 2000's have been produced in a 'Plus' and 'Minus' version, with the Plus version being slightly fuller in the bow. The Pata hull is said to be slightly flatter in the after section enabling it to plane earlier and therefore

faster off-wind. The difficulties of building a Finn with modern materials to the strict minimum weight requirements combined with the various weight reductions in hulls over time means that most boats will now carry some lead. The location and quantity of lead is important to check both in the boat and on the certificate. The weight reduction in the mid 2000's allowed for the introduction of a digital compass. If the boat does not have a digital compass the chances are high that it has not been weighed to the new rules.

The two most commonly available hulls in the UK are built by Devoti, Petticrows, and Pata. Devoti have been building competitive GRP Finns since the early 1990's and the Pata boats, although now built in Hungary, come from a long tradition of Finn building. All makes of boat built after the mid 1990's are competitive with only some small subtle changes made to the hull shape and deck layout over time. Expect to pay from £3000.00 for a hull built in the 1990's and at least £6000.00 for a mid-2000's hull. Many of the most competitive boats were built from around 2002 and can go for considerably more money, especially if complete with mast, sails, and trolley/trailer. If you are willing to look outside the UK boats are available from dealers in Holland and France, but you will need to register them in the UK and get a UK sail number before you start to race.

## Top boat purchase tips

When you find a boat, make sure that you see the current measurement certificate. It will save time and expense if you do not have to re-measure the boat. If one is not available then make an enquiry through the Finn website of the membership secretary who may well have a copy. A measurement and ownership certificate is required at all international events, where your boat may be weighed.

As UK boats of all ages sell very quickly you may be tempted to look overseas. If you do go down this route make sure that you have proof that VAT has been paid.





PHOTO: FRANCOIS RICHARD

Check the condition of the hull under the trolley cradle – you are looking for bubbles where the gel-coat has been effected by a soggy wet trolley cradle – expect to see some discoloration but not bubbles.

## Masts

When buying your first Finn the best advice is just to get a boat and a rig and go out sailing. Do not get hung up on the stiffness of the mast and its bend



characteristics – just get out and sail. Race boats are often sold without a rig as many owners find a mast they like and want to keep it for their next Finn. A brand new carbon-fiber mast will set you back between £3500 and £4500 so do not rush into purchasing a new mast, wait until you find the characteristics that suit your sailing styles and fitness.

## Sails

The most popular brands are currently North, WB and Doyle. A new laminate sail will set you back around £1200.00 but 2/3 regatta old sails are often available from squad sailors for around £550.00. Laminate sails can shrink with age and UV exposure so check how far the tack sits up the mast before buying.

## And finally

If you have any questions then ask away on the Finn Forum. Experienced Finn sailors who are more than happy to offer advice regularly visit the BFA Forum. Someone will know the answer to your query; you never know you may even find the question has already been asked!

## Roll of Honour 2019:

- **Current Olympic Champion**  
Giles Scott GBR 61
- **World Champion**  
Zsombor Berecz, HUN 40
- **European Champion**  
Giles Scott GBR41
- **National Champion**  
James Skulczuk GBR 81
- **InlandChampion**  
James Skulczuk GBR 81
- **MastersChampion**  
Lawrence Crispin GBR 74
- **Travellers Trophy winner**  
Cameron Tweedle GBR 98
- **Classic with Carbon Champion**  
Peter Blick GBR 32

## Contacts:

- **Chairman**  
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- **Treasurer**  
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- **ClassSecretary**  
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- **MembershipSecretary**  
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- **TrainingOfficer**  
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# Clubs where Finns are sailed

## Club Contacts

■ **Annandale SC**  
Stewart Mitchell  
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■ **Christchurch SC**  
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■ **Keyhaven SC**  
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■ **Mengeham Rythe SC**  
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■ **Thorpe Bay YC**  
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■ **Royal Harwich YC**  
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■ **Warsash SC**  
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■ **West Kirby SC**  
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■ **West Riding SC**  
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Contact the fleet representative nearest you to arrange a test sail or contact the Secretary@finnuk.org.uk if no local Finn club.

