

# The Future of Para World Sailing, a sailor's view.

For Para sailing to survive we need to move forward with the times. In order to be reinstated in the 2024 Paralympics games the sport has to become accessible to both sailors and spectators. The sport needs to move with the times providing fun, fast and competitive sailing that appeals to both sailors and non-sailors alike. This is the only way we will entice the youth and newly disabled into the sport.

When a young 17-year-old female sailor at the sailor's forum, was asked what is it that your friends want to sail. She said they look up to the 49er and NACRA17. These are fast high performance boats with a big spinnaker. Para sailing needs to follow the direction of the Olympic classes and America's cup with fast boats that appealing to non-sailors.

The more I hear from current sailors the greater I become convinced the SKUD18 has to remain as the pinnacle of what parasailing represents. The SKUD has opened up competitive sailing to highly disabled sailors and is the major drive in increasing the percentage of female sailors. No other class of boat allows highly disabled sailors to compete in a high performance boat. The boat looks fast, has a large visible spinnaker and downwind they are perfect to sail. The SKUD is the 49er of the Paralympic fleet. The SKUD is a boat people in junior fleets can look at and aspire too. The other equipment options presented for highly disabled sailors do not have the same appeal. MNA's are already invested in the fleet. Yes, there are only 80 boats currently but that is 80 more than any other alternative that allows highly disabled sailors to compete. We are at the point now where older boats are available and could be given to developing nations to help build the momentum of para sailing. They may not be competitive with the top of the fleet but it is a starting -point. There may need to be tweaks to the class, which I think we need to be open to suggestions. Possible we could introduce a more physical crew role to entice athletic people with a disability that would not have normally considered sailing as their sport. This could mean a crew on trapeze or hiking with the addition of hiking straps.



The SKUD will never have the fleet numbers as the one person non-technical and technical options but this is driven by the disability requirements, gender requirements and cost. I do not see this as a problem when you consider what the boat represents and how well it can market para sailing, if marketed properly. What other sport allows a highly disabled athlete to compete in a physical sport? There will always be cost associated when catering to highly disabled sailors and this is difficult to avoid without excluding them from the sport which is not our objective. The SKUD will not reach the 32 country requirement on its own but it does meet many of the other requirements the IPC are looking for, marketability, looks fast, inclusion of highly disabled sailors, and increasing female participation.

The SKUD alone is not the future of Para Sailing. My proposal is three fleets for the future the SKUD, a non-technical single person and a technical single person in the 2.4mR.

We need a single person non-technical boat that is appealing to sailors and non-sailors alike, cost effective and accessible to developing nations. The non-technical boat needs to work on a model similar to the laser. Where Para-World sailing owns 20-30 boats and they are shipped between World Cup events. A sailor needs to be able to fly in with their bespoke seat, bolt into a Para World boat and sail.

This is why I am pushing for the Weta Trimaran as the non-technical single person boat. The boat is exciting, fast and could be sailed by the level of disability currently in the 2.4mR fleet. A performance boat that would appeal to younger sailors and non-sailors. Look at the direction the Americas Cup has taken sailing. People want to see high performance multihull boats. The Weta provides this.



As shown in Garda the boats can easily be modified to have a seat in the centre. This will need further development but we could have two traveller tracks along the deck where a competitor bolts their bespoke seat in. The boats are simple but not at the cost of performance. Unlike other boats being evaluated which are simple at the detriment of the sailing.

The fleet is already established with over 1,000 already in circulation. The cost of a Weta is 14,000 USD this is less than what nations spend on setting up a 2.4mR and not that much more than a Liberty. The boats could be easily stacked in a container or trailer for transport. Unlike the current Para sailing fleets, the Weta does not require a crane to be launched making sailing more accessible for developing nations.

The Weta does not require an established marina like the 2.4mR and SKUD which require cranes to be launched. With the increase in beach assessable wheelchairs and matts the Weta could easily be launched from the beach in developing nations, reducing costs on developing nations and reliance on infrastructure to enable Para Sailing.



One of the problems with the 2.4mR is the significant jump in skill required from any of the development boats (in my case the HANSA 303). I have personally see how overwhelming the jump can be for developing nations at the last Para Sailing Worlds. The Weta is not the same level of jump and can be introduced gradually (sailing without the spinnaker). Two people could sail on a Weta for training purposes. An instructor can be on the trampoline providing direction while a new sailor is in the seat controlling the boat. This is a great way to build a sailor skills and confidence.

The Weta is the perfect equipment for trying a new spectator friendly format with their high speed and brightly coloured spinnakers. We could see 4-5 short races close to shore. This would be perfect in locations such as St Kilda in Melbourne were the SWC Medal Races are competed along the beach and in front of the pear. There is potential for a knockout fleet format. Where 10 sailings compete in 2-4 races with the top 5 progressing to the next round. This could allow larger numbers of competitors without increasing the numbers of boats. Reducing the number of boats in each round might also make the sailing easier for spectators to follow. There is endless potential.



We are all aware of the benefits of maintain the 2.4mR fleet in Para Sailing in the interim. The 2.4mR is a well-established within Para sailing and outside and our best chance of reaching the 32 country requirement. The 2.4mR is the cheapest and easiest to transfer out of the current Paralympic fleet. The class has a large able-bodied fleet and does not rely on being a Paralympic boat for survival. It makes sense to maintain the 2.4mR as a Paralympic class. The 2.4mR is a boat that sailors, both able-

bodied and disabled see and are instantly drawn too however they are an old design and alone are not the future of Para World Sailing. Further work is needed on reducing the cost of the 2.4mR. I see a change to the design and number of sails as a practical way of reducing the cost. I believe over time we will see a shift from the 2.4mR to only having one type of single person boat, the Weta. The Weta is a modern boat and more cost effective.

If reinstated the IPC will allow 80 athletes to compete at the games. 80 athletes provide a lot of opportunities for developing nations to gain a spot at the games. With a focus on high country participation in the non-technical one person boat we could easily have 25 different countries at the games, if not more. My proposal is to only marginally increase the number of countries in the SKUD fleet at the games and having more spots available in the Weta to increase take up of the fleet. More country spots will help entice developing nations into the sport. My proposed split is give below.

	<b>Countries</b>	<b>Crew</b>	<b>Athletes</b>
<i>SKUD</i>	18	2	36
<i>Weta</i>	25	1	25
<i>2.4mR</i>	19	1	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>		<b>80</b>

The SKUD, Weta Trimaran and 2.4mR all bring something different to Para World Sailing. Together they provide a platform for all levels of disabilities, modern fast boat designs, an established platform to build on with the SKUD and 2.4mR, and a cheaper alternative for developing nations with the Weta. The SKUD and Weta would be well suited to trying different sailing formats and marketing of the sport. We will have a product that can be marketed to both athletes and spectators. Para Sailing will only work if you have all three classes included in the future. No single class will cater to our requirements.

We need to keep an open mind going forward and listen to our fellow athletes. Without the athletes there is no sport to begin with.

Regards,



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