

A Review of the DragonFlyer

Ken Lindsay

As a grandfather and a life-long small boat sailor, I've been on a search for a boat for my young grandchildren—a boat in which I can teach them to sail; a boat that will keep their devoted attentions as they grow as sailors; and a boat they and I will love sailing. I have followed the online, illustrated story of the Dragon Flyer's design and construction with growing interest. John and Ruth graciously hosted me to a tryout sail of their prototype Zip on a gloriously sharp, sunny Maine morning at the end of September. Although I can't really say I was surprised, my experience of sailing Zip way exceeded my expectations. My recap of sailing Zip is to rave!



We sailed in flat water in an 8-ish mph steady breeze laced with gentle gusts and lulls. John and I sailed together comfortably as Zip accommodated two adults successfully. The small rig of main and jib had plenty of power to keep us two large guys moving and maneuvering well in the light air. The light pulls on the sheets, the instantaneous maneuvering, the comfy seating on the flat decking or the cockpit floor, and the stability of the hull both under way and along side the dock all immediately impressed me as great for children. I found it intriguing putting Zip through all points of sailing, and experimenting with finding the optimal adjustments of the sails. I found her easy to sail and tolerant of mistakes yet inviting of close adjustments to the rig and to the trim of the hull in the water. I sometimes wasn't sure when I had her set just right... Happily, these complexities are a welcome challenge. I thought she sailed especially well close on the wind. She seemed to power along even when coaxed a bit into pinching up too close.



Sailing Zip solo only increased my fascination and pleasure—and Zip’s speed—as she was free of another adult’s weight. What was hard was heading back to the dock. John and I easily dragged Zip up onto a floating 15-inch high dock to switch the mast to her catboat rig. John had fiber glassed the flat bottom sections below the strakes to protect Zip from stones, rocks, and dock hauls. I found her almost equally lively and fun to sail with the main alone. I will certainly start my grandchildren out as cat-boaters (they’ll love the term too).





I know the Dragon Flyer will be a wonderful teaching platform. It's a design that fascinates me. Watching John and his children sail Zip I'd constantly think both, "it's gorgeous," and, "it's such an elegant invitation to sailing!" As I look at the Dragon Flyer I love how the long bowsprit carries way off forward ahead of the low, sharp, vertical and narrow bow that then sweeps aft with the dark lapstreaks to resolve themselves into the flat, broad, graceful skiff sections. For me, the high curve of the fully battened main helps the lush, beautiful red of the sails give a feeling of compact power and balance. Zip is just addictive to sail and a joy to look at!

Ken sent us this review after his test sail day. He is now building a DragonFlyer for himself and his grandchildren.

