



Weta Trimaran Best Dinghy

It happens every year with BOTY: one of the smaller boats in the lineup reminds the judges of the pure exhilaration of fast, small-boat sailing. This year, that boat was the Weta Trimaran, which gave the J/95 a serious run for the overall title. If there's one boat that will get any sailor excited about multihull sailing, and small-boat sailing in general, it's this New Zealand import. It's quick, solidly built, incredibly stable and forgiving, and easier to rig than a Laser. When it comes to the fun meter, the Weta has it pegged.

On hand in Annapolis for the pre-sail briefing was the Weta's creator, New Zealander Chris Kitchen, who enlightened the judges on the long, grueling development of his 14-foot trimaran, a project that he and his father started in their garage back in 2003. We're thankful for their dogged persistence.

There are now more than 300 Wetas sailing, approximately 75 of which are in the United States. Once the judges got their hands on the yellow boat come test day, they quickly understood why: "It's really well built, but the best thing about this boat was

JUDGES' P.O.V.

- The most fun boat of the week
- Easy set up
- Quality construction

➤ **Test conditions:** 15 to 20 knots, steep chop

➤ **Recommended use:** One-design racing, day sailing

➤ **Recommended race crew:** 1 to 2 (440 lbs. capacity)

➤ **Stats:** LOA 14'5" Beam 11'6" DSPL 275 lbs. SA (u/d) 124/334 sq.ft.

➤ **Price:** \$10,995 (includes custom trailer and dolly combination)

➤ **Contact:** www.wetamarine.com



BOTY judge Chuck Allen three-sailed the Weta Trimaran with ease in 20 knots. From trailer to water is a quick affair: drop the lightweight floats (with carbon beams) into the main hull, step the rig, hoist the sails, and go sailing.

sailing it," said Holby. "If I could have taken out any of the other boats again, this would have been the one." To get his turn on the Weta, though, he had to pry it out of the hands of Allen, who was first to beach launch and quickly disappeared out of sight, tearing across the Chesapeake Bay under main, jib, and screecher.

Trimarans are unique sailing craft, which have characteristics that take

getting used to: in high winds, pitch-poleing and hobby-horsing can be problematic, but all the judges confirmed the Weta had no such tendencies in the short chop and 20-knot gusts.

"The thing goes like it's on rails," said Allen.

Because of the Weta's prolonged development, the boat is highly refined in terms of its setup and sail-control systems. The judges got it off its trailer (mostly disassembled), rigged, and were sailing in less than 20 minutes. The floats (with carbon



Boat of the Year Runner-Ups



Here's what the judges had to say about the other nominees. Look for reviews of some of these boats in future issues of *SW*.

CORSAIR DASH 750
Great construction, fast and fun to sail, but it's essentially a Corsair Sprint 750 with more interior.

EKO 6.50 An \$84K entry to Mini racing scene. A great, solid, and technical boat for hard-core soloists.

K650 Super high-tech build and design with top-shelf hardware; fun to sail, but price (\$64K) could inhibit U.S. one-design growth, and it may struggle in light-air PHRF fleets.

LANDING SCHOOL 30
Great daysailing concept from the Landing School,



but its high-wind test exposed shortcomings in the sailplan.

M65 Mini-style offering (but not Mini class legal); simple sail-handling systems, but presented unfinished.

MORRIS M29 Bristol-quality, classic-style daysailer, ideal for a casual club fleet.

RUSTLER 24 Remade 1960s one-design (Piper 24), well built and fun to sail, but not a new design.

SENSEI 9M Custom-quality construction and great daysailing attributes

(lounging space and roomy belowdecks), smooth helm, but there's excessive friction in the control systems and no easy spinnaker launch and retrieval system for shorthanded sailing.

TOPAZ RACE X A rugged and quick little rotomolded dinghy with a versatile sail plan (main, jib, or kite to suit the user). Easy setup, great price, and high youth appeal.

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frames) slot into reinforced holes in the main hull, and simple tensioning lines lock them in (as does the rig when the shrouds are attached). Once they stepped the 9-pound carbon rig, lashed the screecher to the carbon sprit, raised the sails (with external halyards), dropped in the carbon kick-up rudder, and ran the sheets, they were off and blazing. An International 14-type tinkerer's boat this is not; it's a sail-it-out-of-the-box, one-design gem.

One example of its versatility is the ability to adjust the sailplan for the desired use. Too much breeze? Go the main alone. The judges sailed the boat with and without the jib, and neither configuration disappointed. In fact, nothing about the Weta disappointed, except, of course, having to hand it back. ✦