

# IRC'S

Four designers bring us up to speed on their latest projects.

# Top Designers

BY CHRIS MUSELER

## Jim Schmicker

**F**arr Yacht Design is one of the most successful firms in the world, but the group has only worked on IRC specific designs for the past two years. The firm is based in the United States where the rule has only recently taken its place in major big-boat events. FYD's Jim Schmicker is behind the latest U.S.-designed IRC machines.

"The rule is definitely in its formative stages in the States," says Schmicker, who has worked on the firm's first three IRC-specific designs, which came out in 2006. "The IRC's core strength is in smaller boats, but here PHRF covers that group." The Beneteau 10R, a 34-footer he helped design with IRC in mind, is in a difficult position in U.S. IRC fleets, typically grouped with bigger boats. A 46-footer to his design, launched in Italy last summer, is a more appropriate size, he says, for the current North American fleet.

Schmicker believes the rule has a transition point between 40 and 50 feet where displacement gives way to light, performance designs. Besides the 42-footer *Sue*, built for a Chicago owner, and its sister-ship built in Australia, he is focusing on larger IRC designs, optimizing the Cookson 50 to the rule and drafting a 98-footer.

So far, Schmicker hasn't seen the sort of wild changes in boat styles with IRC as was the case with IMS. "IRC is more performance oriented, especially in the larger boats," he says. "You're not trying to make the boat slower so it can handicap even slower." This performance approach, he says, plays right into his office's strengths. "We're making a very quick boat that can compete for line honors in all of the major offshore races," he says.

Though most maxis are narrow for their length, Schmicker's current designs are significantly wider, with more power in the hull shape. He says that because of the canting keels, the boats are sailing at a lower angle of heel and that the drag from a wider form is less of a concern.

Another area Schmicker is focusing on is waterline length. Some European designers are playing with overhangs and bow shapes to help shorten the waterline, but the Farr office is producing its first generation of IRC-specific boats with long waterlines and short overhangs. "We've done our homework with respect to other IRC designs," says Schmicker. He points out that IRC measures the boat upright. With a longer waterline, he explains, a design is able to have flatter sections under-



neath the center of the boat with tighter bilges. These harder turns in the hull shape allow for efficient use of waterline length when heeled.

Schmicker says that even with developments in technology, he finds it interesting that IRC is tending towards simplification. Though the rule is more stable and simple than its predecessors, he says Farr is still working hard to improve in-house VPPs, adding, "Yacht design is not going to get any easier."

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TOP LEFT, CARLO BORLENGHI/SEA AND SEE