

LAKE RACER

by Chris Smith

THERE is a fascination about sailing very light, grossly overcanvased yachts; a fascination evident, and developed, in the Thames A Rater and the Norfolk Punt but severely limited to the rivers and broads of this Country. The lighter conditions and calmer waters of the lakes of Switzerland, Austria and Italy have bred similar yachts, and this year saw the second running of the European Lake Cup. The three-race series is held throughout the season; on Lake Geneva — the Bol d'Or du Lemman — in June, the Rund um Bodensee in July and the final, prestigious Centomiglia Race on Lake Garda in September.

The races are open to three Classes: the largest, A Class, caters for yachts from over 11.5m up to 14.5m. B Class covers from 9.5m to 11.5m, and C Class from 8.5m to 9.5m — all of them are monohulls as multihulls are banned from this series.

Something of an arms race has occurred since the Lake Cup was inaugurated in 1982 with A Class being dominated by larger (usually), lighter (always) yachts which are increasingly like very large dinghies and which fly an enormous sail area, usually from a fractional rig augmented by masthead floater jibs and spinners. Stability is provided by a minimal ballast keel and a crew of up to ten, half of whom will be out on trapezes. To increase the effectiveness of all this human ballast Bruce Farr, designer of the fantastic A Class racers 'Grifo' and 'Farrneticante' in 1982, introduced trapeze racks — the 18-footers of Australia, New Zealand (Farr's home) and the US have been using them for some years. The Cup organisers banned the racks for 1983 for all new boats so the Swiss syndicate that approached Farr for a new design in 1983 was very happy to see this innovative designer revert to an enlarged International Moth design with solid wings, which perform the same function as the racks but are an integral part of the yacht (although they can, in fact, be removed for trailing).

'OPNI' (an acronym of 'Object Planet Non-Identifie') is 10ft shorter than the all-conquering 'Grifo' but weighs in at 2,500lb lighter due to her Nomex/Kevlar sandwich construction.

The construction was entrusted to Mark Lindsay in the USA, a well-proven builder of high-tech 505s, Tornados and FDs,



sails from Phi of Geneva. 'OPNI' was launched one day before her first race, the Bol d'Or in which she came fifth. She has since won the Centomiglia Race (by five minutes from 'Zoe', an older Grobey design) and the European Lake Cup.

'Grifo' and 'Farrneticante', first and second in 1982, were well down the list: under fifteen minutes separated the first ten finishers from the two hundred yachts which started the Centomiglia Race.

There is no doubt that this is only the beginning, not the end of this particular story. Farr is likely to be besieged by

is also at work on a new boat for next year. Local designers too will be sharpening their pencils this coming winter.

The Lake Cup arouses enormous interest in the European Countries that stage the three events, which are set among many others in the season for similar yachts. The Cup organisers have agreed to keep the Class limits static until 1985. The scenery is magnificent, the racing close, if sometimes frustrating, and it would seem a perfect excuse to get in some fast circuits of three of the loveliest lakes in Europe in a very exciting boat.