

BOATING

NEW ZEALAND

Home › Magazine › Boat Brief › MRX still match fit



The 34-year-old MRX fleet continues to offer exciting match racing. The fleet has been used for international and national events and is available for charter, charity events and regattas. While the fleet is managed, the boats are privately owned and Wednesday night racing is very popular

BOAT BRIEF SAILING

MRX still match fit

Boating New Zealand

4 October 2024

Maritimo

S-SERIES SEDAN MOTOR YACHTS

LEARN MORE >



The MRX fleet has been a well-known sight on Auckland's Waitematā Harbour since the boats made their debut more than 30 years ago for the 1990 World Match Racing Championship. Today they're still highly competitive, and a cost-effective way to get into some top-level racing, writes Cameron Thorpe.

The original 11-boat fleet is still in action today, maintained in top racing condition. The boats are privately owned, mostly in share arrangements, sailed by both their owners and chartered for key events.

Fleet manager Cameron Thorpe says many people think the boats are owned and run by the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron which takes care of their berthing, but in fact each yacht has between one and six owners, and shares are currently available. After buying into the fleet, owners pay an annual maintenance fee according to their share of the boat's usage.



Close quarters action at the mark

"In today's 'cost of living crisis', when many people are also time poor, MRXs make a lot of sense for owners. The annual maintenance and management fee for a quarter share is less than half the cost of renting a 12 metre Westhaven marina berth, and that includes insurance, sails and maintenance," Thorpe says.

- Advertisement, article continues below -





"The MRXs are a managed fleet, ensuring the boats are kept even, with replacement sails, antifouling and hull cleans done on all boats on the same day. The MRXs are undoubtedly the fairest and most even one-design keelboat in Auckland, with no ability for owners to 'cheque-book race' for an advantage – it's all down to who sails the boat the best!"

The MRX fleet was built when the RNZYS gained the rights to host the 1990 World Match Racing Championship.

"When word got out that a fleet of yachts would be imported for the event, key people in the New Zealand marine industry had a better idea," Thorpe says. "Industry stalwarts John Street and Kim McDell were instrumental in what became the Farr MRX."





The 34-year-old MRX fleet continues to offer exciting match racing. The fleet has been used for international and national events and is available for charter, charity events and regattas. While the fleet is managed, the boats are privately owned and Wednesday night racing is very popular

McDell had already built over 150 Farr 1020s, so it was decided to use the 1020 hull mould to make the MRXs. Kiwi designer Bruce Farr created a new optimised racing deck and cabintop for the 1020 hull, a new keel and rudder were optimised for manoeuvrability, and a few subtle changes were made to the rig and sail plan.

- Advertisement, article continues below -



The boats were the world's first purpose-designed match race fleet. After the 1990 event, they were also used for numerous match race tour events, other international regattas, and the Open and Women's National Keelboat Championship regattas.





The 34-year-old MRX fleet continues to offer exciting match racing. The fleet has been used for international and national events and is available for charter, charity events and regattas. While the fleet is managed, the boats are privately owned and Wednesday night racing is very popular

“Most of New Zealand’s top sailors internationally have done their time on MRXs – if you look at the list of sailors who have competed on them over the years, it reads like a who’s who of world yachting,” Thorpe says.

Although the fleet is now 34 years old, the design was ahead of its time and still looks modern today. Regular maintenance and updates ensure the boats have many more years ahead. All boats were recently repowered with new Volvo D1-20s and saildrives, rigs were refurbished a few years ago, and more new sails are in the pipeline.

The most popular event for MRX owners is twilight sprint racing.

“It is very intense and competitive, with up to four short races a night held after work on a Tuesday during summer. For the 2023-24 season, we had 27 races, with the series leader changing numerous times,” Thorpe says. Owners also use the boats regularly for Wednesday night racing, rum races and winter series.





The 34-year-old MRX fleet continues to offer exciting match racing. The fleet has been used for international and national events and is available for charter, charity events and regattas. While the fleet is managed, the boats are privately owned and Wednesday night racing is very popular

The fleet is available for charter and is regularly used for corporate team-building, charity events, regattas, and as training vessels for teams headed off to compete in overseas regattas. Charter income and boat sponsorship all goes into running the fleet and offsets owners' maintenance and management fees.

