

Nick Rees about himself:

Personal Rationale:

I must admit that when Christina asked me if I would take on the commodore role, I was taken completely by surprise. Evelyne and I had discussed taking on some small role within the UK association to give something back, but I really hadn't thought about anything like the commodore role. However, I see Christina's logic to it because Evelyne and I can work as a bit of a team. Evelyne loves to go to events to meet people, I am more technically inclined, have been in the class for a while and have competed as a crew at a fairly high level. We also love to travel - Evelyne is Belgian and I am Australian, but we live in the UK and also have UK passports; and I have always worked in large international science organizations. I think this helps and is appropriate in the role of commodore of an international class.

Fireball Biography:

I grew up in Hobart, Tasmania in the 1960's, 70's and early 80's and we had an active Fireball fleet at the time. I first sailed a (very old, even at the time) Fireball in the late 1970's with Chris Payne, who I went to school with (we were 2/3 of the school sailing team). I subsequently bought a boat (I think it was 12766) for the Frankston worlds in 1982, but didn't do that well. However, this was the start of a period of success for Australia, with the Tasmanians from my home club winning the 1983 (Stu Hamilton and Chris Connor) and 1984 (Gary Smith and Nick Connor) worlds, so I can bathe in their reflected glory...

When I moved to the UK to study in 1984, I stopped off at the 1984 worlds in Richmond on the way, meeting Mark Rushall and subsequently crewing for him in 1985. This started a period of sailing Fireballs almost continuously until I left for the USA in 1991 (crewing for Mark in 1985, Andrew Partington in 1987 and David Sayce in 1990, and helming for Andrew's fiancé Karen Nash in 1986 and once again with Chris Payne in 1989 when Heather couldn't sail because of a bad back). Departure for a job in Hawaii put a stop to Fireball sailing until we returned to the UK and I ran into Dave Hall in 2012 and he asked me to sail with him because Paul Constable couldn't do the Inlands. I enjoyed it so much I mentioned it to David Sayce as well and the next thing I knew David had bought a boat and expected me to crew for him - which I happily did and we sailed together from 2014 getting slowly better culminating with a 6th in Carnac in 2018. David didn't want to go to Canada in 2019, so I joined Keith Walker for a year. However, I really wanted to sail with my wife, Evelyne, (we grew up on opposite sides of the world sailing Cadets, with our families meeting regularly at Championships) and so I bought a 14798 during Covid and we have been regulars at events since Covid has passed.

Class Vision:

Whilst the goals of Fireball International are well explained in the Mission Statement of its the constitution, I see the immediate challenges as two fold, technically and socially.

Technically, after the discussion at the recent Europeans, I do feel we need to look fairly closely at a range of technical options to make the class more attractive and easier to build. We should task the technical committee with coming forward with a number of concrete proposals, ranging from minor technical changes that optimise the construction process to make the boats easier to build, to potentially radical changes that make the class more attractive to newcomers. This must be done without changing performance, keeping the external hull-shape, sail plan, mass and moment of inertia within the current range.

Socially, the challenge is to build the fleet so championships become destinations and so attract more competitors. I believe this has to be done by focussing on social aspects and friendships, as well as competitive ones. My current vision is that to have a successful event, we need 100 boats - and to maintain this, the person who finishes 99th has to have such a good time they are eager to turn up next time.

Practically, I would like to turn up to as many national events as possible (at my own cost, of course), just to learn from all the associations. We did the French Nationals this year and would love to visit Switzerland, Czechia, Italia and, of course, Australia next year. I think we can learn from each other and share ideas, and keep each other informed of all the sailing opportunities that are available.

In closing I really am excited about this and am looking forward to working with the executive and council to build the class for the future.