

# A model for learning

Have you ever considered using radio-controlled models to help beginners learn to sail? Before stepping into a dinghy, sailing can be experienced at first hand with a radio boat without the normal safety or fear factors. With just a little instruction on transmitter controls, anyone can be radio sailing within minutes, well enough to sail a simple course. **Roger Stollery**, Technical Secretary of the Model Yachting Association explains.

The basic principles of sailing can be picked up very quickly and learning by experience is surely one of the best ways to learn. Taking full responsibility for sailing a boat usually comes at the end of a course, but putting this first with a radio boat is not only fun, but can create the enthusiasm to learn more and give confidence when actually stepping into a dinghy.

As an example of how this can work, when my son was six years old he was able to sail a foot long RC Footy boat competently. He learned the principles of setting the sails for the course being sailed, the impossibility of sailing straight into the wind, the idea of tacking and gybing relative to the wind direction etc. One day on holiday, immediately after he had been sailing his Footy up and down the river next to the beach, he was lent an Optimist. After a short briefing he stepped aboard on his own and was immediately able to apply all the principles he had learned on the Footy. From that point on he was only seen ashore for comfort breaks!

As an instructor you will find it very easy to demonstrate key principles as you can show and discuss how to do

something correctly, and show the effects of doing it incorrectly, right in front of your students. Small, light models are very sensitive and can easily show, for example, how the over-sheeting of sails slows a boat down or creates the risk of gybing on a run. Not only is radio sailing an ideal teaching tool for the initial stages of learning to sail, but it can also be excellent for improving the skills of competent sailors by racing to hone tactics, strategy and rules knowledge etc. Radio racing is unique in the ability to cram in a lot of races, giving plenty of opportunity to practise.

Radio sailing boats may be small but, like any boat, time and care is needed to look after both boat and electrics, to charge batteries, set up and store carefully. Suitable boats for teaching are the smaller and cheaper classes on the Model Yachting Association's racing programme. In order of cost to get sailing (from £50 to £330), these are: Footy Class (MYA BUG 3, MYA 12 inch Yacht kit and others), BOTTLE boat, Micro Magic, Fiesta, RC Soling and RC Laser. These require varying degrees of DIY construction, but some are available



## Micro Magics on the pool at the RYA Dinghy Sailing Show

ready to sail. Information about these can be obtained via the MYA website [www.mya-uk.org.uk](http://www.mya-uk.org.uk) – go to the 'Forum (new for 2007)' and scroll down to the MYA class descriptions.

The choice of boat may depend on the

sailing water and wind conditions. Open tidal waters may require the larger and faster boats such as the BOTTLE boat and RC Laser, whereas at the other end of the scale the Footy boats are ideal for small areas of water close to the control area. These are very manoeuvrable and ideal for children to 'learn by playing' and, like the Micro Magics seen on the RYA pool at Alexandra Palace, go well when fan assisted!

In February Hamish Stone and Aaron Wolkff became the Eastern Regional winners of the RYA Young Sailor of the Year award. Both boys are keen BOTTLE boat radio sailors – proof indeed that learning by play has obviously paid off.

## Welcome to the new National Sailing Coach

### RYA Training welcomes John Thorn into the post of National Sailing Coach.

John started at the RYA in May, bringing with him an extensive background in watersports, ranging from the commercial sector, charitable trust, and most recently Director and RYA Principal for two large local authority sailing and canoeing centres.

Though now based with his family in Cowes on the Isle of Wight, John comes originally from Plymouth and enjoys most water activities from swimming and water polo to scuba diving, kayaking and of course dinghy sailing and yachting. He is a Coach/ Assessor, Powerboat Trainer and Yachtmaster® Instructor and Examiner.

In what little spare time he has, John sails and races regularly, both inshore and offshore, and belongs to Gurnard Sailing Club and the Island Sailing Club.

When asked what he thought about his first few months in the hot seat, he replied that he was "absolutely thrilled with the move, and to be working with such a motivated and talented team. When the difficult enquiries come in you know that you can rely on colleagues to help. How

*we pull together and respond is a real team effort."*

John has been getting out and about to as many regions, centres and clubs as possible in his first few months and hopes to continue with this. He is spending time listening to what people have to say about the current dinghy and keelboat training schemes, instructor training and where you want them taken in the future.

Please email questions, comments or ideas to John on [john.thorn@rya.org.uk](mailto:john.thorn@rya.org.uk)



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Learning by play