

## Proposal from the **UK Fireball Association** ('UKFA') to permit two spinnaker poles to be carried - governed by a new International Fireball Class Rule 19.4

### **Introduction**

The UKFA proposes that twin spinnaker poles are permitted to be fitted with effect from the 2017 season. In submitting this proposal, UKFA is aware the use of carbon in pole construction is preferable but rests content with traditional aluminium poles.

Currently only one spinnaker pole is permitted to be carried. This restriction appears to emanate from rules 19.2 and 19.3 that refer to 'the spinnaker pole'.

During the 1970s/1980s some UK boats used twin spinnaker poles but, at some point and for reasons that are not clear, the practice was outlawed.

### **New rule to be created and proposed wording**

UKFA proposes a new rule - 19.4 – "Up to two spinnaker booms may be carried".

Note rules 19.1, 19.2 and 19.3 do not specify construction material; the introduction of the words "aluminium alloy, steel or wood" to be consistent with rule 17.1 (mast) and 18.1 (boom) may be advisable – perhaps as a new rule 19.1.

### **Reason(s) for the rule change**

Introduction of twin poles will make Fireball attractive to a wider group of sailors than at present. It is well known that attaching the Fireball spinnaker pole can prove difficult to smaller crews especially females.

In the UK, competitor symmetric spinnaker classes to Fireball such as the Merlin Rocket, Scorpion and Flying Fifteen already permit twin poles. It is noticeable that a far greater number of female crews sail in these classes than in Fireball.

Asymmetric classes have a marketing advantage over Fireball as it is far easier to launch and recover an asymmetric kite than a symmetric one. This advantage needs to be minimised to permit Fireball to attract sailors who are wary of symmetric spinnaker classes.

UKFA has conducted a trial of twin poles and a note of support from the owner concerned, Simon Hextall (FB15093), may be found in Appendix 1.

### **Disadvantage(s) of the rule change**

There is only one disadvantage of the proposed rule change – cost. A basic non-flyaway system consisting of two poles fitted with standard single pole ends for attachment to the mast and fork pole ends for the guy (as used by some UK Merlin Rockets) would cost around £100 to fit. At the other end of the scale, a full fly-away system would cost around £700 with the most significant component being the mast-mounted 'ezi-launcher' at £309. Please

see the attached quote from Ian Pinnell of Pinnell & Bax in Appendix 2. Clearly individual preferences will vary and experience in other UK dinghy classes suggests varied systems will emerge.

### **Conclusion statement**

The introduction of twin poles will open up the Fireball class to a wider number of sailors. There is cost involved but it does not have to be prohibitive and it has to be borne in mind that not all sailors will wish to convert; there are many who are perfectly comfortable with the traditional single pole set-up.

In a world where the sailing population is diminishing but the number of classes competing for that reducing number of sailors remains high (and new up-to-the-minute designs appear every year) it is important that Fireball continues to evolve and does not become to be seen to be in a time warp. Introduction of twin poles is a relatively minor way of evidencing (controlled) change.

The UKFA recommends this proposal to Fireball International for approval.

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