

## Interview with John Gettens – Winner of the 5<sup>th</sup> Skate National Championship at Nedlands – 1961-62 Season

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John Gettens (centre) with the Australian championship trophy—admired by A. Hayes (left) and Ken McDowall.

**JOHN GETTENS** and **O'Lay** have become somewhat of a legend in Skate sailing. John and his for'ard hand, Keith Cole, have built up a wonderful combination over the past two seasons. John started his career in 1956 with the Burraneer Bay VJ SC and the old Jay *Avoca*. Once smitten, he built three Jays named *Hi* in quick succession. He won his club

championship twice and was runner-up to Bill Kopsen on the last occasion.

He then built his red-hulled Skate **O'Lay** and sailed her with the St. George and Port Hacking Clubs. In that first season **O'Lay** won the N.S.W. title, most inter-club events and was runner-up to Laurie Chivers in the Australian titles at Georges River.

Last winter Gettens and Cole built another Skate, painted it black, again named it **O'Lay** and won just about every race they entered—including the Aussie title in Perth.

Crew work is of paramount importance in the Skates and John claims that Keith Cole is two-thirds of **O'Lay**. Keith is only 9 stone and is a human dynamo. John, incidentally, is 6 ft. 3 in. and weighs 12 stone 7 lb.

This is their advice: "Concentrate on combination. Plank teamwork is most important and hard to perfect. The gear must be good. Our mainsail is full in the foot and flat at the head. The jib is big with the drive close to the luff wire. Our mast top is very flexible yet this same mast is very stiff below the hounds. Boom is flexible. We find mid-boom sheeting best. Three-way brace and all-round tack is the only spinnaker system. Our self-draining cockpit helped us this season. Simplicity is another must. Stick to the Skate plans for hull shape. You won't go far wrong."