

# pimp my dinghy

## Clothing

**Nick Gill** and his team at sailing kit specialists Gill had the task of making the prizewinning crew look cool and ensuring they would sail in comfort...

I have so many happy memories of sailing Fireballs that I was delighted to hear one had been selected for pimping. My father had Fireball Number 47 and helped start the third fleet in the country at Trent Valley SC back in the early '60s.

Believe it or not the boat worked well on the river back then as it pre-dated the introduction of the spinnaker and trapeze. Some of the older members said it reminded them of the Half Raters which



were sailed on the Trent in the early days. Both the Fireball and sailing clothing has changed significantly since those early days.

In many ways the clothing 'pimp' differs from the others as we are not renovating or repairing, but providing completely new clothing.

We wanted to provide the very latest in clothing technology that would provide warmth, protection and complete freedom of movement enabling Kirsten and Andy to concentrate on sailing fast.

### Base or first layer

Starting from the skin out we suggested a long sleeve rash vest. Rash vests today are much more versatile. They originated as a means of reducing wetsuit itch. However, modern wetsuits are so good that it is rarely a problem. The rash vest today could equally be worn as a final layer to reduce windage and the potential for clothing to get snagged. The latest Gill rash vests have a SPF 50 UV finish and interesting



**Above**  
Gill's funky  
rash vest designs.



**Right** The Aquatech shoe  
is suitable for trapezing  
crews.





sailing themed graphics.

### Wetsuits or drysuits

Moving onto the warmth (in water) layer there is really only a choice between wetsuits and drysuits. As the boat is being sailed initially in the summer we suggested wetsuits as the best and most flexible solution. Wetsuits are also generally the choice of trapezing crews due to the reduced bulk and windage.

Wetsuits today bear no comparison with their predecessors. They tended to be heavy, unlined and made from one weight of Neoprene. The development has been in materials, construction and fit. For this project we suggested the Gill Huraken short arm wetsuit for Andrew and the Siren short arm for Kirsten. These wetsuits are made from five different types of Neoprene. For the upper body we use TPM C-Mesh. This is a high density thermal protection Neoprene so the best insulation is where you need it most. There is a gravel skin finish on the upper arms to

**Far left** The Pro Racer Buoyancy Vest.

**Below** Gill's Dinghy Smock – also available in bright pink!



# Professional tips

**Nick Gill** shares some tips to help you make the right clothing choice...

### Base layer

Most dinghy sailors will wear a rash vest under the wetsuit, alternatively you could wear a thermal base layer. Both improve the warmth and the comfort and today's design and fabrics mean the products are much more versatile.

### Wetsuits or drysuits

Both will keep you warm. The wetsuit is generally preferred by trapezing crews for its slim fit and lower windage. If you are in the water you will be wet and warm, whereas with the drysuit you will be dry and warm. It is very much down to personal taste. You need to consider where you will mainly sail – inland or on the sea, and also time of the year. Wetsuits come in summer shorties, short-arm and long legs and also a full winter steamer.

### Outer layer

The beauty of the outer layer is that it can extend the range of the wetsuit. A shortie wetsuit provides the body warmth in the middle whereas a breathable top and salopettes can provide additional wind protection and warmth, covering the rest of the arms and legs.

There is a wide choice of tops. Personally I recommend one with waterproof taped seams. You won't necessarily need it with a wetsuit but it does mean it can be worn without the wetsuit in warmer conditions. It can also be used on bigger Sportsboats should you get the opportunity.

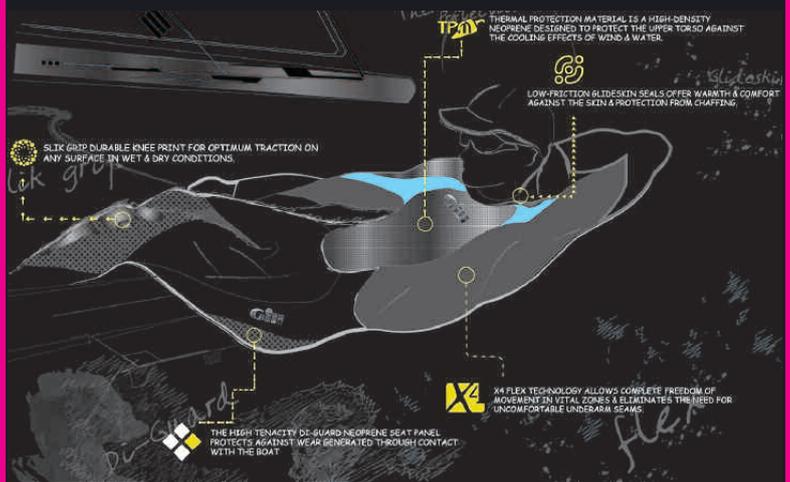
### Hands and feet

Cold hands and feet have probably spoilt more days sailing than anything else and there is really no need for this to be the case today.

Things to consider for the feet are whether you are trapezing or hiking. Trapezing requires a flexible sole and less support. In the summer go for the Aquatech shoe or for all-year-round use the trapeze boot. For hiking out you generally require more ankle support so you should use a full ankle boot.

It is worth remembering if you are wearing a drysuit you will need a size bigger boot or shoe to accommodate the Latex seal. If you have it too tight it just restricts blood flow and makes your feet really cold.

For hands it is finding the right balance between sufficient dexterity for rope handling and protection against ropes and cold. Most people have different winter and summer gloves. One area where there has been significant improvement in recent years is the improved grip for rope handling.



Right and below right  
Kirsten and Andy try  
on their new Gill kit  
for size.



Below Fully togged up  
in their new colour-  
co-ordinated Gill kit.



reduce wind chill and improve durability. The under-arm area uses an X4 Flex technology with extra stretch and removes the need for uncomfortable under arm seams. There is also Di-Guard which is a high tenacity Neoprene for knees and seat area to reduce wear.

### Outer layer

In addition to the wetsuits we suggested breathable dinghy smocks and salopettes. This gives added protection from wind and spray and the flexibility to use the garments without the wetsuit for sailing on inland water in warm weather. One key feature of the Gill Breathable Top is the 'Freedom of Movement' cut allowing you to raise your arms without any restriction. Also the adjustable neck seal allows exceptional protection and adjustment.

A huge amount of time and effort goes into fit and pattern development. Weeks can be spent refining the pattern to achieve optimum fit. We are frequently told it is the Gill silent salesman. Once you try it on you really can feel the difference.

### Floatation

The final item of clothing is the Pro Racer Buoyancy Vest, which is colour co-ordinated with the waterproof top. The Pro Racer is a completely new vest that manages to reduce the thickness of the foam across the front to improve the fit. There is excellent adjustment and a zip pocket for race instructions or a sneaky chocolate bar.

### Feet and hands

On the feet we have suggested the Gill Neoprene Trapeze boot for Kirsten which has one of the best grip soles available. Andy has the Aqua Tech shoe with a particularly flexible sole for trapezing.

Modern ropes are thinner and harder so good gloves are essential. The new Gill Championship glove has a new hardwearing grip material on the palm called Proton and Kevlar® reinforced fingers for durability. ■