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SAILING: The S\V14 dinghy developed by Disabled Sailing Thailand will make its European debut in Germany this weekend, when the first S\V14 dinghy off the production line goes on display at the Düsseldorf International Boat Show.

Sailing

By The Phuket News

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The S\V14 being put through its paces. Photo: Disabled Sailing Thailand

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Shanghai, the S\14 two-person dinghy is designed for people with disabilities and other physical impairments.

With a pricing point of just US\$3,000 (about B95,800) ex-factory, it is poised to open up the sport to less-abled people under the approach of offering "affordable, available sailing".

Phuket-based Marine Surveyor Peter Jacops, who began the S\14 project just over three years ago, explained, "Our aim was to develop a boat that could be sailed by people with disabilities, and at a reasonable price. The S\14 is exactly that.

"Up until now boats for Para Sailors have been surprisingly expensive, in some cases 10 times more than the S\14, so cost was important, as was design, safety and performance," he said.

Peter is the instigator of the S\14 project and the founder of Disabled Sailing Thailand, a not-for-profit organisation that supports and promotes sailing in Thailand for people with disabilities.

"Unfortunately I won't be there in Dusseldorf for the launch, but my wife, Nicole Vandewall, will be, along with the designers Alex Simonis and Maarten Voogd," Peter told *The Phuket News*.

"I have been told that the head of World Sailing (the world governing body for the sport of sailing, formerly called the ISAF) will be there to make a speech to commemorate the occasion," he added.

The project was born after the International Paralympic Committee in 2015 dropped sailing from the 2020 Paralympics. Frustrated, Peter decided to take action. Realising there were no disabled sailing programmes in Thailand, and boats were prohibitively expensive, Peter turned to Facebook.

"I posted on my Facebook page asking if any of my yachting friends could help me design a new, sexy looking, competitive and most importantly cheap and accessible boat for disabled people, and with a few minutes I received a reply from Alex Simonis and Maarten Voogd of Simonis-Voogd Design, saying that they were willing to take up the challenge.

"Russel Vollmer a paraplegic sailor friend, joined our efforts and soon we were sitting at the bar of the Royal Cape Yacht Club in Cape Town making our first concept on a tissue.

"It took about one year of design and engineering to come up with the S\14 with the first build starting in Pattaya, immediately followed by Cape Town, Hawkes Bay New Zealand and later Sausalito, USA. The Netherlands and Belgium soon followed," Peter explained.

While the original idea was for the S\14 to be a self-build concept, akin to the successful Mirror Dinghy, which as one of the biggest and most successful class of dinghies in the world now numbers more than 70,000 worldwide, things changed when Alex Simonis had a conversation with Fareast Yachts.

Known for their quality, and with a similar desire to give back to the community, Fareast Yachts agreed to produce the S\14 at their production base in China and in a remarkable offer, will supply the first 1,000 S\14s at a subsidised price of US\$3,000 for

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The first one off the production line has arrived in Germany as this paper goes to print, and will be on display at boot Dusseldorf.

Since Fareast Yachts confirmed their production, sailors and clubs worldwide have been enquiring about the S\14 and multiple orders have been placed.



The first fleet expected off the production line is heading to Thailand. Bought by Ocean Marina Yacht Club in Pattaya, there will be eight S\14s arriving in Q1 this year and will be raced for the first time in a one-design class for Para Sailors at the Top of the Gulf Regatta (April 30 – May 5, 2019).

Simpson Marine has also paid for one, whilst the very first S\14, the fully tested and operational prototype dubbed "No. 1", was paid for by Gulu Lalvani of Royal Phuket Marina.

"This first one was so important as it was the one that we tested and made adjustments on. Without this one, the others would not have followed," Peter explained.

A second S\14 was built in Thailand by Austhai Marine and donated to Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

Disabled Sailing Thailand have been working with Thai Para Sailors in Pattaya and have, in collaboration with the Royal Varuna Yacht Club, been teaching them to sail.

The first sailors represented Thailand at the 2018 Para World Sailing Championships in the US in September last year, and followed this with by attending a World Sailing Paralympic Development Program in Japan.

grow.

“Things have moved quickly in the last 12 months. It’s exciting to see the first SV14 off the production line and the first fleet arriving in Thailand later this year. Our goals are not competition sailing only, however, we want to support recreational sailing for all,” said Peter.

“Empowering adaptive sailing is what we are about and we are working with businesses and the yachting community throughout Thailand to make sailing a possibility for all. I would like to thank everyone who has helped us so far, and I encourage any businesses or volunteers who wish to support this great cause to contact me through the Disabled Sailing Thailand website.”

While Fareast Yachts are doing the base builds for the boats, Simonis and Voogd explain on the sv14.org website that the plans are open source.

“What we did was to design a 14ft modern yacht which can be completely built out of 11 sheets of 4’ x 8’ plywood, 1 sheet of 3’ x 6’ 12 mm steel and 22’ x 10’ strips of hardwood. We prepared a CNC cutting package using these raw materials, which can be put together like a jigsaw puzzle to create the boat in an estimated time of less than 200 man-hours,” the website explains.

“It should require no more skills than that of your average DIY guy and no expensive tools. The beauty of this concept is that the materials are available everywhere, the plans and cutting patterns can be downloaded at no cost via the internet and 2D CNC cutting is so widely used that this can also be done all around the world in a place near you,” it adds.

For more information about Disabled Sailing Thailand, visit www.disabledsailingthailand.org.

And for more information on the SV14, visit www.sv14.org.

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