

'A' Class Racing Comes to Britain

Looking to the future at the Sheerness R.Y.A. trials

THE Spring Holiday weekend, May 27-29, 1967, will perhaps go down in catamaran history as the birthday of "A" Class racing in Britain. Certainly it was not premature, because an "A" Division race series was held in the Royal Yachting Association One of a Kind trials in the summer of 1964 at Torquay (see pages 114-128 October 1964 edition).

For that series the first "A" cat from America was flown over—the original "A" *Lion* (at the time known as a *Sea Lion* 18). Bob Osborn of Sailcraft helmed the boat and demonstrated with eight successive wins that the heroic little 12-ft. *Sea Skater*, the only other single hander, was completely out-classed. Peter Butcher and his father Don, co-designers of the *Sea Skater* took the defeat

sportingly but they were determined to design and build a faster boat than the "A" *Lion*.

At International Catamaran Week in 1966, Peter in his prototype *Iolanthe I*, sloop rigged (pictured on the June 1967 cover with *Iolanthe II*), had his first chance to sail against two "A" *Lions* and although he could not defeat them he often divided them.

The R.Y.A. Trials provided the first chance for Peter to try Una-rigged *Iolanthe II* against a Sailcraft built "A" *Lion*—sailed, as it happened, once again by Bob Osborn. At last, as the times of the races show, Peter seemed to have achieved his objective and was able to out sail the "A" *Lion*.

But in the two years that the Butcher father and son team had been struggling to improve their design and build two prototype boats,

John Mazzotti, whose design skill, combined with his helmsmanship, had brought him to the top in "B" Division in 1964 was also, busy with a new "A".

The Mazzotti boat is named the Unicorn and three of the first eight Unicorns were there to see that Peter Butcher's *Iolanthe II* did not have everything her own way. It took three of them to do it as it was only Mazzotti's own boat *Unicorn* that got round the courses consistently faster.

But we must go back to the beginning—the trials were being held to allow R.Y.A. judges to observe the boats with a view to giving financial assistance to the best boats in both "A" and "B" Divisions to enable them to participate in I.Y.R.U. International Trials which are to be held on August 5-12 at the



Roland Prout sitting out *Bambi* on the sliding sheet. *Bambi* was originally sloop rigged.



Note *Bambi*'s solidly-built sliding seat which is limited to athwartship travel making it difficult to trim the boat fore and aft.



Bob Osborn noses his "A" *Lion* ahead of *Typsy Myth*. Note how his main sheet leads along the boom, down the centre of the deck to his left hand without crossing his knees.



John Mazzotti in typical stance on the trapeze. Notice the need for the long tiller extension. Also the window in the excessively low sail.