

**“Liberty”** ... the right or power to do as one pleases. (*Oxford Dictionary*)

**Frank Hammond**

I had arranged with Chris Mitchell, the designer and manufacturer of Access Dinghies, to meet at the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria to test sail and experience the new Access Liberty. On the way to the yacht club I drove over Melbourne’s Westgate Bridge, an excellent vantage point to view the northern end of Port Philip Bay. The wind socks on the bridge indicated the wind was due south and to my estimate was a steady thirty knots with stronger gusts in the intermittent rain squalls. I figured that the test sail would be postponed for another day.



Wrong ! On arriving at the club it was obvious that Chris was chomping at the bit and the sailing was going ahead as planned. With the mainsails and jibs partially reefed (a great Access Dinghy feature) three Access Liberties set out onto Port Philip Bay. My earlier estimate of the wind strength was accurate, but the rain squalls had passed and the day appeared to be on the improve.

In these very adverse conditions, the handling characteristics of the Liberty were amazing to say the least. To windward, the bow lifted over the two metre waves with no water coming over the deck. The helm was beautifully balanced enabling the boat to be comfortably steered through the waves. Unlike many yachts, which in similar conditions, can be a real bitch to tack, the Liberty never hesitated in going through the eye of the wind and quickly settling onto the new tack. On easing the mainsheet and a tug to leeward on

the joy stick steering, the yacht instantly responded and blasted off an exhilarating reach. Catching waves and staying on them was a real hoot. With the three yachts literally feet apart on the same wave gave us all a healthy adrenalin rush. Like frustrated surfers we tacked back out to sea for more and more of the same.

Despite the varying sailor weights and abilities the three boats were remarkably equal in performance. There is no doubt that class racing in the new Liberties is going to be very close.

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*Frank Hammond, is a professional sailmaker and sailor with in excess of 35 years experience in the sailmaking industry. He has designed and manufactured sails for all types of yachts. He has been responsible for the design and construction of sails for Offshore Racing and Cruising yachts, America’s Cup yachts and Olympic Class sailing dinghies . He has raced in one design dinghies, one design keel boats, offshore yachts and multihulls. He has won state, national and world championships in a variety of yacht types. His current yacht “Horizon Sprint” is a top performing yacht on Port Philip Bay. Frank’s company, Horizon Sailmakers provides coaching and sponsorship to Junior and Disabled sailing programmes. Frank also provides individual and group coaching regarding racing tactics and strategy, crew training and sail trim.*