book & video review  
reviewed by Paul Talbot

Sail Fitter

by Michael Blackburn  
RRP $32.95 (117 pages; 210mm x 297mm)

Sorting through some of the unreviewed books that publishers have kindly sent us turned up a previously overlooked gem. Reviewing a book a month, sometimes two, in advance means that interesting works are sometimes passed over.

So turning up *Sail Fitter* was a nice surprise and a return to the water that seems to me to have something for everyone. Not only that, it’s also nice to review a worthwhile Australian, self-published book. It is no coincidence that I was thinking hard about my own fitness, not just for sailing, but also for everyday needs. And I think I found something useful in this revision of the 1997 book, *Sail Fit*, published again in mid-2001 under its updated title.

Keen small boat sailors will recognise the author as Australia’s Laser Class Bronze medallist at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Michael Blackburn brings to his work much more than that. The author has a PhD in Human Movement Studies and mixes the theoretical with the obviously practical in presenting elements of sailing fitness and sail training. Blackburn also brings to bear his experience as Sports Science Coordinator for the NSW Institute of Sport Sailing Program in 2000, preparing training programs for other very successful sailors.

At first glance the list of Contents for this book read like a recipe for winning a gold medal at the Olympics. And that might be the ultimate purpose. I suspect if you followed the recipe to the letter, then it wouldn’t be the author’s fault if you failed. Michael Blackburn acknowledges that there’s a little more to it, like tactics and strategy, but his purpose is to lay the foundation for successful small boat sailing.

It’s an odd thing that Chapter 1 starts off with an analysis of the ideal weights for sailing in the various Olympic and Laser Radial classes and a proposition that your goal might actually be to gain weight, not lose it. This leads on to some useful dietary advice that you could use, even if you never set foot in or on the water.

It’s then that the author gets into the meat of *Sailing Fitter*. No pain, no gain might be a motto as the book addresses Training for Hiking – no, not the tramp through the bush kind – the hanging for long periods of time off the side of a dinghy by your toes kind, while your thighs do an impression of ringing like a tuning fork. The exercising itself comes towards the end of the book where the Appendix explains and illustrates all the exercises required. But the author is keen on bringing the reader along gradually, suggesting training programs which would appeal to the club sailor, not to mention the national rep.

There are a few issues to cover for Michael Blackburn. He is keen to give you the benefit of his international sailing experience. From avoiding dehydration, sunburn and all sorts of minor injuries, to dressing appropriately for varied conditions. But, taking the sail training aspects, Blackburn provides drills for sailors to practise on the water. With his detailed advice about many of the moves that can lose a race, the author lives by the creed of “perfect practice makes perfect”.

Two chapters jumped out: one because of relevance titled “Fitness for masters, sailors and old salts”; and the second for its good sense, titled “Fitness for young sailors”. Both chapters deal with the different demands on sailors in these age groups and each provides a case study to demonstrate the commitment to fitness and the need to keep the principal goal of having fun in the sport, while meeting competitive urges, in mind.

*Sail Fitter* is available from Boat Books or from the author, whom you can contact by email at 1michaelblackburn@compuserv.com.

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By Graham Lloyd

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Sail Fitter: Sailing Fitness and Training includes over 100 photos illustrating training exercises. The text discusses gaining and losing weight, sailing nutrition. Sorting through some of the unreviewed books that publishers have kindly sent us turned up a previously overlooked gem. Reviewing a book a month, sometimes two, in advance means that interesting works are sometimes passed over. So turning up Sail Fitter was a nice surprise and a return to the water that seems to me to have something for everyone. Experts in Sailing & Fitness, SailFit offers a combined approach to sail training. The partnership of Kurt and Meka Taulbee is a well rounded program. Look to SailFit for intense, informative, active sailing seminars and individualized coaching/training programs for Laser sailors at all levels with fitness, health and Nutrition consulting by Meka for enhanced performance and mental acuity. Find Sailboats for sale on Boatshop24.com, Europe's largest marketplace for boats & yachts. Discover excellent sales on popular sailing vessels. The ultimate vessel for the island explorer or the sporting enthusiast - sailboats have been in use since the year 5000 BC and are a very iconic mode of transport that’s now also been rejuvenated for competitive events. We’ve got racers for sale from top manufacturers like Beneteau and Hanse, or larger sailing yachts from Bavaria and Jeanneau.