



# Rockin' the Boat

Sydney's SKUD18 Campaign  
vying for selection in the  
Australian Paralympic Sailing Team for Beijing 2008.



In 1997, 8 year old Ame wrote . . . . .

Once I learn all the tricks to  
sailing and I listen to what Chris  
says, I'd like to go in the Olympics.



## **PREAMBLE** - Chris Mitchell (co-designer SKUD18)

Ame was the catalyst who motivated us to embark on a 10 year campaign to change the culture of the disabled sailing world - breaking down barriers and giving people with the most profound disability the opportunity to compete at the highest level.

The story began at the 1995 TADSEM (Technical Aid for Disabled Seminar) in Sydney. We were exhibiting for the first time the Access 2.3 single seater fitted with servo assist electrics. In the audience was Jackie Kay who would turn out to be the key driver of Sailability in Australia. Among the exhibitors were Pam and Barny Barnbrook, launching Clark Bay Cottages, their fully accessible resort which was nearing completion on the shores Narooma's Lake Wogonga.

The Barnbrooks told me they had a 7 year old daughter, Ame, who was born with no arms or legs and only a short three toed foot. Finding accessible holiday venues was so frustrating, they built their own. Clark Bay Cottages would be owned by the Amethyst Foundation and be a legacy for Ame to manage when she was ready.

Later that year Ame sailed the 2.3. She then competed in the 1996 Access National Championships held in Canberra. Kay Cotte presented her with the gold medal for the servo assist division. During this weekend Barny and I mused that if Ame was to manage Clark Bay Cottages, it would be a boost if she won a "real" gold medal in the Paralympic Games in sailing. The resort could then be promoted as a venue for disabled sailors from around the world.



But there were two major problems with that scenario. First, the boats used in Paralympic competition were far too inaccessible, and second, the rules prohibited sailors using any power assisted equipment. So that was where we had to start. We needed to have the rules changed and a new class introduced which Ame could sail.

So for the next 10 years Ame continued practicing and competing in many events including all NSW state and Australian national championships, an international regatta in Osaka Japan and a World championship at Blairgowrie in Victoria.

In April 2005 the International Paralympic Committee chose a two person (2P) event over the single person (SP) event for which we had already designed and built the sensational Access Liberty. So we quickly changed tack, creating a cutting edge flying machine based on a Sydney 18 foot skiff hull with colourful spinnakers. We called this the SKUD, an acronym for **SK**iff - **U**niversal **D**esign, a boat specially designed to be skippered by anyone, regardless of their physical ability. In a blaze of colour and spray, the SKUD would demonstrate to the world that severely disabled people could be in total control. The SKUD was specially designed with Ame in mind.

In November 2005 we triumphed when the International Association for Disabled Sailing nominated the SKUD 18 as the new 2 person discipline in the 2008 Paralympics in Qingdao, China.

We have come this far, now we need to ensure Ame gets her chance to demonstrate on the global stage what is possible.

## INTRODUCTION

In April 2005 the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) announced that a third discipline would be included in the Beijing Paralympics in 2008. This third discipline was to be a Two-Person Keelboat event.

Then in November 2005, the International Association of Disabled Sailing (IFDS) announced that Australian designed, SKUD18, was the chosen boat. In addition, the IFDS announced that the event required at least one female and one Functional Classification System (FCS) 1, the most severely disabled category in disabled sailing.

The Rockin' the Boat team (or the *Boat Rockers*) represent Sailability NSW, a registered Australian charity since 1998. Our ultimate goal is a Gold Medal for Australia at the Paralympic sailing competition being held in Qingdao in 2008.

The team has the support of the NSW Institute of Sport, and is a member of the Australian Paralympic Committee's Beijing Shadow Squad. This squad is made up of athletes who have been identified by their sport as potentially qualifying for the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games and is a member of the Paralympic Preparation Program for their sport.

### Team Name Background

Rockin' the Boat has two connotations.

- "Rock 'N Roll" - both Ame and Denis are musicians. Ame has gained entry to Wollongong University studying Bachelor of Creative Arts, playing trumpet, whilst Denis' hobby is playing saxophone – alto, tenor, with soprano being his favourite.
- "Don't rock the boat" is a common expression meaning don't do or say anything to upset the status quo. Ame is possibly the world's most disabled sailor attempting to gain selection for the 2008 Paralympics. With Ame helming her boat using servo assist electronic controls, the team is sure to forge new ground, evoking strong reactions along the way.

### Boat Name Background

The name **SKUD18** (Skiff Universal Design) was chosen for these reasons:

- **SK** - Skiff. **UD** - Universal Design, the design philosophy used in the SKUD.
- Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary indicates "the word **Skud** is probably of Scandinavian origin; akin to the Norwegian word skudda." As a verb the word means to **run before a gale** and as a noun it means **a gust of wind**, both very appropriate for this new exciting, fast and safe sailboat.

## TEAM BIOGRAPHY

### Ame Barnbrook – Helm



On July 4, 1988 Ame was born with phocomelia. She has no shoulders, arms or hands and only the lower half of her left leg. Nobody knows how that happened. She uses her three toes for eating, writing, playing the trumpet and fulfilling her passion for sailing.

Ame started sailing in the Access program at the age of 7. Ame went on to win National Titles in Access 2.3 Class in both servo assist and open class in 4th, 3rd and 2nd Div. In 2004 progressed to the Liberty Class and was placed equal 5th at the IFDS Single Person Dinghy World Championships in Blairgowrie. Ame was the youngest competitor by 10 years, and the only female in a field of 14 from six nations. 2005/2006 saw Ame concentrating on HSC. Having successfully completed HSC at Narooma High School

In 2007 Ame began living independently while attending Wollongong University studying for her Bachelor of Creative Arts with a major in Sound and Composition. Ame also plays trumpet and is currently studying Grade 7 AMEB. She has gained a University sports scholarship. Ame and her older brother, Robert travel to Rushcutters Bay for regular training sessions with team-mate Denis Critchley.

### Denis Critchley – Crew



Denis began sailing in a VJ sailing dinghy at age 12 years. For about 3 years he gave up sailing at high school took up competitive swimming, but returned to sailing at University with a 12 foot skiff.

In 1968 Denis built and raced an 18ft Stingray catamaran called 'Friday's Child', taking out club and regional c'ships. Denis moved to Sydney in 1972 and began racing 18 ft skiffs, including 'Ampol' who remained his sponsor until 1984.

Denis sailed on Sydney Harbour in skiffs from 1975 until 1984. He gained success including making the Australian team for World Titles.

After Denis' accident in 1987, he did not race again until 1990 when he won club championships in a J24 yacht. Following these successes Denis obtained 30 ft cat Meow and has won club events. Denis won the Australian disabled championships twice, and represented Australia in World Disabled Championships in Rutland UK and at Pre Paralympics regatta at St Petersburg Florida in 1996, coming 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> in the last 3 races. Denis regularly sails, coming 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 2006 Australian Endeavour Yacht Championships and 4<sup>th</sup> in 2007.

From 1995 until 2005, Denis was Commodore at Australian 18ft Skiff Club.

**Denis is enthusiastic to sail with Ame, competing at the IFDS Disabled World Championships in Rochester, New York in September 2007, as the first qualifying round for the 2008 Paralympics. Denis' vast expertise in racing 18ft skiffs will be of paramount importance to the success of the "Boat Rockers" when sailing in the 18ft SKUD.**

Below, Denis on the helm of “Ampol” 18 ft skiff before his accident.



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