flying fifteen Mallorca

For all those new to The Islander, or just wanting to know more about Flying Fifteens, here's a potted description of the boat.

A Flying Fifteen is a Two Person Racing Yacht.

The Flying Fifteen is sailed and raced in several countries around the world on the sea, estuaries and inland waters. Club racing is the most important aspect of flying fifteen sailing and the Spanish fleet is based in Mallorca.

The boat is 6 metres (20 feet) long and the 15 refers to the original waterline length - 15 feet (4.57m). **The Flying Fifteen is a dinghy with a keel** so is ideal for those who have sailed dinghies and are tired of or too old to cope with capsizes. And we've still recorded speeds over 13 knots!

Unlike many sports boats you only require one other person to sail with you, crew combinations come in all sizes, genders and ages - it is just a matter of tweaking the boat to suit your combination. It is easy to launch by 2 people either off a ramp or using a hoist, it is also easy to tow behind a family sedan.

The Class Association is very strong and class rules are tightly managed by the FFI Council so that any developments do not de-value existing boats. Flying Fifteen International Council manages the class, and each affiliated National Association nominates a delegate to FFI Council.

The Flying Fifteen is an International Class recognised by World Sailing. National events are organised by the various National Associations, while the World and European Championships are organised by Flying Fifteen International (FFI).

Early season Racing

You'll be aware of the unusual weather we've been experiencing, and as a result, little sailing to report. Only on February 4 were we able to get out at all. With winds gusting 30 knots, survival was almost more an issue than racing. There was one 10 minute period with more than 35knots over the decks. Two flying fifteens braved the conditions, *Dragonfly* and *fuego fatuo*. Downwind speeds of 16 knots were recorded, although *fuego fatuo* blew out a spinnaker guy fitting and stopped trying for any further records.

Flying fifteen autostarter

To allow us to get in more racing, even when there are no club officials to start the races, Michael Beecken has been hard at work building an electronic race starter. This will mean we can all start together, with proper startline tactics, something we don't get with the gate starts we've had to use recently. The alternative is to have someone on a committee boat, which means one less boat racing.

First up was to make enough noise to be heard at the far end of the line. Michael selected a piezo horn, which certainly packs a punch. This is controlled by a Raspberry Pi computer, which costs about €35 and allows contact with the outside world over GPIOs (General Purpose Input Outputs).

The 5V power supply for the computer comes from a mobile phone reserve battery. As the horn needs 12V, it has its own battery. To enable the computer to switch the 12V of the horn, a little amplifier circuit boosts the horns 12V.

A short program, written in the Python programming language, receives a signal from one of the sailor's mobile phones, when it's time to begin the start procedure. As soon as the procedure is initialised, the program instructs the piezo to send an attention signal, which consists of a few short beeps. Then one minute later the 5 minute signal is sent. And so the procedure moves through the normal 4 and 1 minute beeps and finally sounds the start tone – which is a little longer.

As we all know, sometimes sailors are not sure if the signal they just heard was the 5 or 4 minute signal or another one. A normal committee uses a combination of sounds and flags, to give visual information. Our little computer is programmed as a wifi router and sends images of the flags to the sailors' mobiles. These flags can be seen in any web browser.
The mobiles need not be connected to the internet to receive the flags signals, but only to the starter system's wifi. So we can use older mobiles without a sim card, which if dropped in the water won't spoil the day!

At the start signal, a camera, another cheap add-on for Raspberries, takes a photo along the start line. The start photo can be seen on every sailor's mobile phone and so everyone can check if someone was over the line.

Although our machine looks a little basic, it works fine and with tweaking will hopefully become a regular member of the fleet.

We've published the 2017 calendar on our website
http://flyingfifteen.mallorcaservice.de and also Facebook **@f15spain**.