

It is now three years since the White Xtra was introduced with over seventy sails sold. Designed to fit an existing Xtra rig, the new sail is made with conventional white Dacron sail cloth but uses the same radial cut with battens and zipper as the Mylar Xtra.

Like the original Xtra the new rig makes the Comet easier to sail for lightweights and beginners with its' shorter and lighter mast. Using a zipper luff sleeve and a halyard lets you keep the mast up and use an overboom cover for far quicker rigging.

We tried to make the original Mylar Xtra equal to the standard Comet in overall performance but the fact that it was of smaller area meant that it was a bit slower on a dead run where an efficient shape isn't so important as pure sail area as the dinghy is simply being pushed along by the wind. To counter this, we have made the new sail a bit bigger in the luff and foot and dropped the boom a bit with a longer leech.

The new sail will fit a Mylar Xtra rig but to get a bit more boom height a new fitting can be fitted to the top of the mast to gain a bit of height. I reckon this new sail is about 6.25 sq. m midway between the Mylar Xtra 6.00 sq. m and the standard Comets' 6.5sq. m.

2020 saw the introduction of the final Comet sail, with twenty-five already sold! It is a reefing version of the White Xtra where the sail area can be reduced to 5 sq. m, similar to a RS Aero 5, Laser 4.7, Topper, or the old Mino rig. The sail incorporates second clew and tack eyes and a new higher sail window.

Long, long ago, back in the last century when Comet only had the one rig, you were able to reef them by winding the sail round the mast. The experts didn't bother or didn't need to but for those less experienced or confident, it allowed them to get out and survive. Often at Championships the wind would get up on the last day and the reefed sail would let them get out and enjoy the race.

Quite rightly the Class Rules forbid changing rigs during an event so anyone using an Xtra cannot change to anything smaller, until now. Although the Xtra's are easier and steadier to sail they are still powerful and can be hard work for the beginner or lightweights in a blow.

To reef, the sail is lowered about 2' and the downhaul and outhaul re-attached. The "unused" part of the sail is neatly rolled up. Unlike my bigger dinghies we used to build, you can't pull the reef in on the water. The Comet isn't that sort of dinghy; you would come ashore in between races to do it. They say the devil is in the detail and a lot of thought has gone into the finishing touches.

As with the Mylar Xtra, the original bottom mast and boom can easily be shortened to create the new rig.

Sail only £390. Sail and conversion kit £435. Plus £75 for the reefing version.