



The Ups and Downs by Judith Eller

Tigre is designed by Ron Given and built in line with the 8.5 multihull class of multihulls. Tigre is French for tiger. This follows in the tradition that Ron started when he designed the paper tiger and went on to design successive boats with Tiger as the theme name, some of which included Gulf Tiger and Tigress. Tigre is constructed of ply, foam and glass. The wing mast is made of ply and glass and stands 11.5 metres.

Tigre had raced for several seasons and was getting closer to being trimmed for performance having lost a mast on the first race.

In 2005 Tigre was entered in the Coastal Classic, one of the major racing events for Auckland sailors. On the day of the race Tigre was performing well and holding 11th place alongside much bigger boats until she pitch poled off Cape Rodney. Tigre was handling the 20/25 SW breeze superbly and the skipper and crew felt that they had plenty in hand. There was no warning of trouble before Tigre pitch poled. The skipper went with the boat, so to speak, and both crew managed to jump clear. All 3 were quickly back on board on an upside down Tigre. A passing boat, Azarra, along with the volunteer coast guard was soon at hand. There were several attempts to right Tigre by towing the stern over the bow. With the weight of the mast, sails and rigging this proved impossible. The hard decision was made to leave Tigre afloat and return the next day to salvage her.

Meantime back in the office I received a call came through from the skipper, who is also my husband saying that 'Tigre had flipped and we are going to have to leave her' and 'can you ring the insurance company and let them know.' Good thinking and seemed a logical thing to do. So after working out who the insurance company was I managed to speak to a claims handler. The reply was something to the effect that I am sorry while the boat is covered for racing it is not covered if it capsizes or more specifically catapults. An extra clause added to the policy. Wouldn't you know it - they have everything covered. What is a catamaran likely to do while racing I ask you. A return call to the skipper, "Did you know that the boat

was not covered for capsizing or catapulting?" The reply "Well, yes I think so".

I drove to Sandspit to pick up the crew. It was clear that they were still running on the adrenaline of the event and reality had not set in. We drove to Westhaven to drop two of the crew off and then headed back to home in Dairy Flat. The reality of the event and cold started to set in. While stopping off in Albany to get fish and chips, as this was not a night for cooking, I was standing in the shop and happened to look up at the TV and there was Tigre upside down on the 6 o'clock news. A hot bath and whiskey was the next necessity.

That night we organized to charter a fishing boat to leave Sandspit at first light on the Saturday morning. So it was an early start with the skipper heading to Sandspit. I began by calling Search and Rescue to advise them of the over-turned catamaran and the position last sighted. I then rang Great Barrier airlines who fly across the area daily to alert them to the search and if they could keep a look out for Tigre. I called the company that flies the light house run and alerted them as well. The charter boat left Sandspit and returned to the position Tigre was last left in and there was no sign of her. So they started a grid search north of Kawau in the Cape Rodney to Hen and Chickens area. The weather was deteriorating and visibility and sea conditions were quite rough. A friend of a friend who had a light plane offered to go up and search for Tigre which he did mid afternoon. Within half an hour of the plane search Tigre was located 25 nautical miles north from her last position. Nestled in a bay behind Coppermine Island in the Hen and Chickens group and floating just off the shore from a rockie out crop. In the bay there was a charter fishing boat as well. At the same time the plane spotted Tigre, Search and Rescue received a call from the charter boat to say they were in a bay with an up-turned catamaran and they had secured a rope to hold her off the rocks. That was both interesting and coincidental that both a call from Search & Rescue and the aircraft came within minutes of each other. My first thought was 'oh what are the legalities of salvage?'

The rigging, sails and mast were cut free while Tigre was upside down and a tow rope attached by the search vessel. At 3 knots an hour the long trip to the Whangarei Heads and Marsden Point was made. Here Tigre was tied up to a mooring.

The following week the pilgrimage was made to salvage what could be saved and taken off the boat. The wing mast was broken in 2 places and repairable. This was laid on the front lawn of a resident for safe keeping. With a bit of local help, a cup of tea and scones it was all done by night fall. After the dunking the motor was serviced

and went well again. The following week with the help of the cranes at Marsden wharf Tigre was slowly and carefully lifted up while the water drained out and she was turned over. The structure was intact with no visible signs of structural damage. A lot of superficial nicks, dings and scratches were evident from the flip and the towage back to port. The excess water was pumped out, the outboard attached and the journey homeward was made to the Weiti Estuary in Whangaporoa. Tigre was land based over the next six months while she was stripped; repairs were done, painted and put back together with the wing mast repaired.

So why or how did it happen? Well there is many a theory to that as there are yachties. There was plenty of experience in the crew. Tigre was under full main and screecher sitting on 15 to 18 knots and the breeze was no more than 25 knots. A reef in the main didn't seem necessary and the sail combination and area seemed right for the conditions. The square topped main and the wing mast even with the main sheet released, still generates a considerable power. The more closely woven weave in the forward tramps when the bows went in may not have allowed the water to drain off quick enough. With the aft tramps made of a more closely woven weave this could have at a certain point of pitch picked up the wind underneath. A combination of these factors could have contributed to Tigre going into a catapult.

The insurance company was receptive to a claim. They agreed to pay out on the salvage costs. All the gear that was removed from the boat after each sail, like a hand held GPS, flairs and clothing were covered under the house insurance so some cost was recovered. Of course the repairs and the putting back together of Tigre were priceless in the true sense of the word.

Tigre is a delight to sail and now she is reefed down more quickly to keep the handling under control. She is fast, responsive and we now know that there will always be a bit of the wild cat in her.

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