WELCOME TO MBSC P-CLASS FLEET

A guide for parents and sailors

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WHAT IS A P-CLASS?

The P-Class is one of New Zealand's most iconic junior sailing classes, with a rich history stretching back to 1923 when it was designed by Harry Highet—originally known as the Tauranga Class. While it has evolved over the decades to embrace modern materials and technology, it remains more or less the same snub-nosed, seven-foot dinghy that first captured the imagination of young Kiwi sailors over a century ago. It is, without doubt, the most enduring of all junior sailing classes.

Designed specifically for young sailors, the P-Class features a single sail and a simple rig that makes it an ideal stepping stone from the Optimist. While the Optimist is a forgiving boat well-suited to learning the basics, the P-Class introduces sailors to a more performance-oriented dinghy—one that rewards excellent boat handling, weight placement, and tactical awareness.

The P-Class has a strong national racing programme with a well-established calendar of regional and national events, alongside a loyal club-level community across New Zealand. The class rules are administered by the Tauranga Yacht & Powerboat Club.

WHO IS THE P-CLASS FOR?

The P-Class is ideally suited to sailors aged roughly 10 to 16 years, with an ideal weight range of around 35 to 60 kg.

At Murrays Bay Sailing Club (MBSC), we pride ourselves on hosting one of the largest and most vibrant P-Class fleets in New Zealand. Our fleet features a healthy, competitive, and supportive mix of both male and female sailors, making it a fantastic social and athletic environment for teen and pre-teen athletes.

Are you ready to step up?

A good sign that a sailor is ready to move into the P-Class is when they can comfortably sail an Optimist around a course in 20 knots. At that point, they have the basic skills and fitness required to handle the P-Class and are ready for the exciting new challenges it offers.

WHY SAIL A P-CLASS AT MURRAYS BAY SAILING CLUB?

MBSC is widely recognised as one of the foremost sailing clubs in the country, boasting an elite legacy of delivering top-tier results in the P-Class fleet. Choosing to sail a P-Class with us means joining a proud tradition of excellence, backed by world-class coaching, a passionate community, and a proven development pathway.

Advanced Rig Control

Unlike the Optimist, the P-Class introduces sailors to a fuller suite of sail controls—including the vang, outhaul, and Cunningham. This gives them hands-on experience tuning their rig to suit changing conditions, building real boat-handling skills that carry directly into youth and senior classes.

The Ultimate Foundation

It is often said that if you can sail a P-Class, you can sail anything—and there is real truth in that. New Zealand's legendary record in international youth and open sailing owes much to the solid grounding in boat handling that the P-Class provides.

Building Resilience and Character

Sailing a P-Class builds mental toughness. It is a more demanding boat than the Optimist, and learning to manage it in a range of conditions gives sailors confidence and adaptability that serves them well in school, sport, and life.

A Heritage Event Pathway

The P-Class is a uniquely Kiwi boat, raced nowhere else in the world, and represents a true rite of passage for New Zealand sailors. Time spent in a P-Class makes sailors fundamentally better; those who return to the Optimist for remaining regattas invariably improve, and the skills gained make the transition into youth classes like the Starling, 29er, and ILCA significantly smoother.

Unmatched Fun and Community

Above all, the P-Class is simply great fun. For most sailors, it becomes their absolute favourite boat from their youth. The regattas have an electric atmosphere, establishing a tight-knit community and lifelong friendships.

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BUYING A P-CLASS

The P-Class is a challenging boat to sail well, and competition at regattas is fierce—so it pays to get the right boat from the start. A boat with a proven racing record and well-maintained gear will give your sailor the best foundation.

One of the wonderful things about the P-Class is how well these boats are built to last. Many boats in the current fleet are over 30 years old, and a few are over 50—yet they still race competitively and are beautifully looked after. Each boat carries its own rich history of past champions, and it is common to find boats that have hosted multiple generations of the same family.

Pricing Guide

Prices vary widely based on condition, gear, and racing pedigree:

Entry Level

$1,000 - $2,000

Good for learning the ropes and local club racing

Mid-Range

BEST SELLER

$2,000 - $4,000

The **Sweet Spot**. Competitive enough to race well without overpaying while your sailor finds their feet.

Top-End

$4,000 - $8,000

Premium race records and high-performance setups.

MBSC Tip:

Before making a purchase, please reach out to our MBSC P-Class Fleet Representative.
Our community is happy to help inspect boats and ensure you get the best setup for your sailor.

BALANCING THE OPTIMIST AND P-CLASS PROGRAMMES

One of the great advantages of the P-Class is how seamlessly it integrates alongside our existing Optimist programme.

The P-Class regatta season runs intensely from October through to the Nationals in early January, offering a rich calendar of events and ample race practice. By contrast, the Optimist class has fewer formal regattas during these specific months, making the P-Class a natural way to keep sailors active, sharp, and racing regularly.

The two classes are highly compatible:

Sailors can attend P-Class regattas as their primary focus while still dipping into Optimist events and training as suits their personal schedule.

A younger sailor new to the P-Class might split time evenly or spend more time in the Optimist.

An Optimist sailor in their final year will often commit fully to the P-Class through to the Nationals in January before switching their focus back to major late-summer Optimist events.

This flexible arrangement allows MBSC families to adjust the balance perfectly to suit their sailor's development.

THE MAJOR REGATTA CALENDAR (2026-2027)

The P-Class season kicks off in May and builds steadily from club-level events to the pinnacle of the season—Nationals week in early January. The Nationals incorporate two distinct competitions: the **Tauranga Cup** (an open national championship) and the **Tanner Cup** (an inter-provincial championship featuring selected representatives from each province).

As a powerhouse club, MBSC proudly hosts two of the major highlights on the winter calendar (the Icebreaker and the Stack Winter Champs).

10 May, 24 May, 7 June 2026

Event:
SailOne P-Class Kick-Off Series

Host Club:
RAYC

20–21 June 2026

Event:
Mid-Winter Freshwater Intergalactic

Host Club:
WBC (Lake Pupuke)

12 September 2026

Event:
Icebreaker

Host Club:
MBSC

1–2 Oct (Coaching) / 3–4 Oct (Regatta)

Event:
Stack Winter Champs

Host Club:
MBSC

10–11 October 2026

Event:
Wihau Shield / Secretaries Cup

Host Club:
TYPBC

24–25 October 2026 (Labour Weekend)

Event:
North Island Champs

Host Club:
RAYC

14–15 November 2026

Event:
Auckland Champs

Host Club:
GBC

5–6 December 2026

Event:
Sir Peter Blake Regatta

Host Club:
TSC

12–13 December 2026

Event:
Auckland Trials and North Harbour trials

Host Club:
KYC / MBSC

16–18 December 2026

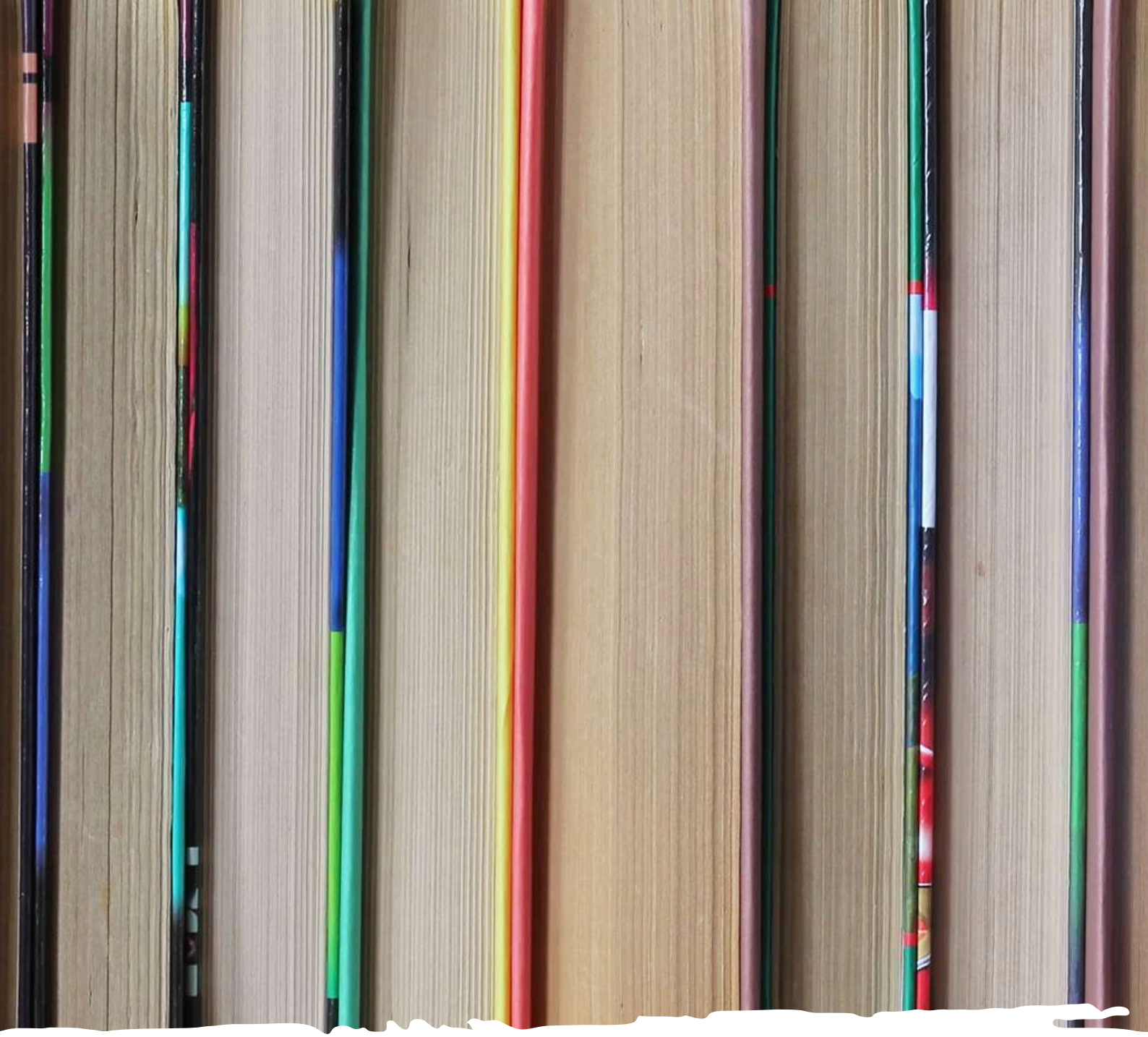
Event:
P-Class Clinic

Host Club:
KYC

4–9 January 2027

Event:
Tanner Cup / Tauranga Cup (Nationals)

Host Club:
TYPBC



RECOMMENDED READING

Want to immerse yourself further in the culture and history of this legendary boat? Check out these fantastic resources:

Our Secret Weapon — Gun Caundle
The definitive P-Class history, featuring inspiring stories from Olympic and Team NZ legends like Peter Burling, Dean Barker, Jo Aleh, and many more. (Available from Sail One)

Fired Up — Sarah Ell (1998)
A wonderful fiction book tracking the sailing adventures of Geraldine as she prepares for two massive P-Class races. (Great for primary and intermediate readers)

Tauranga Adventure — Patrick Wilson (1963)
Classic children's sailing fiction set around the P-Class. (Out of print, but highly worth hunting down secondhand)

NZ Geographic — "P Class" (April 2020)
An excellent feature article diving deep into the unique history and culture of the class. (Free to read at nzgeo.com)

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