

Buying a Solo:

As ever, the amount you are prepared to pay will determine the quality of the boat. It is usually the case that, when you can afford to move on, you can often get back much the same as you originally paid out (unless you buy brand new). Being a one design boat with only a few professional builders does mean that boats retain their value if well looked after.

Starting at the top, FRP boats tend to be the most popular choice both for their performance and ease of maintenance. The most prolific builder is Winder of Keighley. He produced a mould back in 2000 for boats numbered from S4300 on. There are over 500 of these by now (mine was the 474th made in Dec 2012) – they are now known as the "Mark I" because he has a second version, the "Mark II"! Both are equally popular and vie for top places in national events. Prices can start from about £3000 – those that have had a wooden deck fitted tend to be the cheaper and can vary in quality, but an all FRP version is usually sound. A new complete FRP Winder with sail, combi-trailer and covers is going to come nearer £8000. A 4 year old boat with a number around S5000 will cost about £5000.

Speed Sails also started producing a similar boat in 2005 (S4590 onwards, moulded by Rondar), the earlier versions of which were as good. Sadly, some of the later boats (moulded in-house by Speed) had problems. Winder took over production and it is that which is now sold as the "Winder Mark II" (S5166 onwards). Confusingly, there is a new, different, Speed Sails boat (from S5198) made by the Boatyard at Beer, which is also doing well and highly respected. Again, from 2006, Boon Boats also made a well-respected FRP boat (starting with S4766).

Mast/Sail: The latest mast favoured by 80 kg and above is the D+. This replaced the Cumulus, which is not that different. Under 70 kg, the C is appropriate and the C sleeved for 70-80kg; there are others - see <https://www.solosailing.org.uk/the-boat/the-mast/>

There are also a number of sail manufacturers – the most popular is probably North Sails. Dacron sails are entirely adequate for lake sailing; the more expensive Technora/Kevlar laminate sails need delicate handling.

If you want a more modest expenditure, there are plenty of good, cheaper boats on the market (almost anything from £30 to £3000). They may not be as quick as the latest versions, but it is still the "nut" on the tiller that makes the biggest difference. In particular, Severn Sailboats made an early FRP hull, usually with a well-made wooden deck. Boats made by Holt are usually very solid (and relatively heavy). The Club has a couple of boats of this variety that can be hired for a period.

Any Solo owner will be happy to show and discuss the merits of his/her boat with interested parties.

Geoff Silcock (S5378, previously S4668, S3937 & S3634)