

The ideal size for the Optimist

“The ideal size for the Optimist is 1.60m and 46kg” NOT!!

The world of sailing is obsessed with the “right” size for each boat. This is scarcely surprising. The medallists at the last Olympics in the Laser Class weighed within 1kg. of each other, the 470 male and 49er teams within 2kg, the Stars within 5kg. OK, so the Finn medallists spanned a weight range of 8kg but at an average of 100kg that is only 8%!

By contrast the weights of the top 10 Optimists at the last Worlds spanned 14kg or 30%!



On the left is the team with the best results at the 2002 Worlds (the winners of the Miami Herald trophy for the best four sailors). They weighed from 38kg (12 year old Paolo Cattaneo who ranked 18th in the 208 boat fleet) to Fabio Zeni at 53kg in his final year who finished 8th.

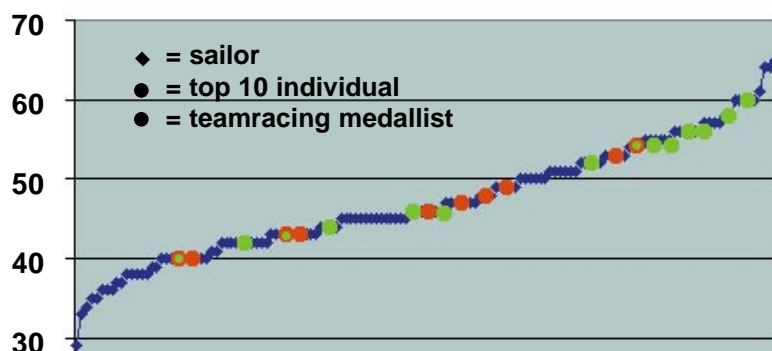
The *average* weight of the 208 participants was 46.3kg. Which is pretty close to the average of Paolo and Fabio. And doesn't prove a lot!

This was in wind speeds of up to 12 knots. In the windiest Worlds on record the winner was Peder Rønholt (right) at 59kg and 1m81. Both he and the “little” girl next to him (Suzanne Ward) went on to become Olympic sailors.



The Top 10

The weights of top ten sailors were typical of a large proportion of the fleet:



	Height	Weight
Matika	1.49	40
Cesic	1.63	43
Zalvide	1.60	47
Kirkland	1.53	46
Le Fevre	1.68	48
Xu	1.70	54
Dubbini	1.65	49
Zeni	1.60	53
Mills	1.53	40
Chew	1.57	43

Were some sailors too heavy?

Possibly. But Damian Saponara (60kg) and Kresimir Kunda (58kg) - pictured below - found their weight useful in the 20+ knots of the team-racing day when they both secured medals, as did Luciano Oggero (57kg).

And there is life after the Optimist. Steven Krol (NED) (64kg) went straight from the Worlds to 8th. place in the Laser 4.7 Worlds, a Class where Bojan Ive (CRO) (57kg) and Pietro Collura (FIN) (56kg) have both headed recent Grand Prix ranklists, while João Vidinha (POR) (64kg) went straight to 5th place in his Junior Nationals of full-rig Laser.

And don't forget that half those 100kg Olympic Finn sailors once sailed Optimists!

