



Starts at the RL nationals were a mix of aggression and confusion. LEFT BELOW: Michael Shannon and his three daughters: a keen family crew.

From the original rig — parallel section, over-rotating mast with a soft sail and 20% overlap headsail — the sail plan has evolved to bigger, bigger-roached mainsails and smaller headsails. Yeomans with Michael Coxon broke through with a very flexible rig supporting a big-roach fully-battened mainsail and small self-tacking jib.

The latest development, also initiated by Yeomans, with the help of fins expert Peter Holmes, two years ago was a dagger board instead of the swing keel that has been traditional in the class.

The race finishes with Dump Truck winning from Sequoia, the Leggs' own 24 being skippered in this series by George Backhouse, with Michael Stevens of Sydney, crewed by his three children, third in Treasure Island.

Mike Shannon has had a bad day. He led to the first mark, hit it and later in the race with the complication of a half knot of tidal current hit it again. He crosses tenth, and has to contend as well with the heavy disappointment reflected in the faces of his crew. He is a keen RL24 sailor, in the class five or six years, on his second boat, always with the three girls as his crew. As they have become older and stronger, his performances have improved.

So Yeomans has the series won without having to start in the last race and the group at the scoreboard soon establishes that the battle for second place is going to be between Backhouse, Warren Walters from Gladstone and Bruce Castles.

Backhouse, a TAA pilot from Southport, until recently owned his own RL24. The crewmen he recruited for this series have not all had experience with RL24s. This contributed to a capsize that cost them a third placing in an earlier heat. The boat, incidentally, righted with a cockpit empty of water. But they have improved steadily from eighth and fifth in the first two heats to consistent 2-4-4-2-1 placings.

Walters, in Sundance, is from Gladstone with six years of RL24 experience behind him. He won the Gladstone JOG championship five years in a row and is highly respected for his ability in a strong breeze and a seaway (a consideration missing from the Broadwater).

Bruce Castles, from Lake Wellington YC (Vic), is the handicapper for the

(Continued on page 67)

to plane downwind in fresh breezes.

Legg had early interest from four or five other people in the Southport area.

He took one of the first boats to South Australia and won the Tripolis race in Spencer Gulf by six and a half hours. "We got 15 orders out of that trip," he said. He made an equally sensational appearance at the 1973 Paynesville (Vic) Easter regatta. With Legg the production fibreglass builder, a class was quickly born. There were 18 starters at the first RL24 national championship and there have been around 28-30 boats ever since.

The RL24 was foundation stone for Rob Legg Yachts Aust Pty Ltd production boatbuilding business. The Leggs later added the RL28 (also trailable) and the RL34 shallow draft cruising yacht to form a range. The company still has a steady output of 24s, one a week for the past nine years, and has built a total 417.

The interior of the RL24 is simply laid out for four adults or two adults and three children. A big vee berth forward and quarter berths aft are separated by a galley unit to port, containing a two-burner methylated spirits stove and to

starboard by a five cu ft ice box unit.

A rigged and cruising-equipped RL24 weighs around 730kg. This light weight for a 7.32m yacht, besides contributing to lively performance, makes it a comfortable trailing load on a single-axle trailer. The trailer, designed by Legg, leaves the last 2.4m of buoyant boat over-hanging, making for easy launching without having to run wheel hubs into the water.

The class rules and restrictions were framed to encourage development: The hull is strictly one design and must be produced from a mould approved by the designer. There is a 454kg minimum hull weight (excluding keel, rudder, rigging and other removable gear). The keel must be 100kg minimum weight but its shape is unrestricted. The rudder is unrestricted.

Working sail is limited to 20sq m maximum but the sail plan is unrestricted. The spinnaker is 20sq m maximum measured area, of unrestricted shape. The mast height, measured from the cabin top, is 8.3m maximum and the spinnaker pole length is 2.67m maximum. Number of crew is unrestricted.