



# Topaz 16CX

**Jeremy Evans** wonders if this new design could be the next international youth cat...

**ABOVE** The Topaz has plenty of power to get out on the wire, and good non-slip sections.

**BELOW** It showed no inclination to invert during capsize thanks to the sealed mast, and was easy to right.

## Specification

<b>Design:</b>	Yves Loday and Rob White
<b>Length:</b>	4.72m
<b>Beam:</b>	2.25m
<b>Construction:</b>	Trilam polyethylene sandwich
<b>Sail area (main &amp; jib):</b>	14.25sq m
<b>Sail area (asymmetric):</b>	11.18sq m
<b>Producer:</b>	Topper International

**Price: £5,995**

**T**he CX is the race spec version of the Topaz 16 cat, doublehanded sister to the Topaz 14. Having designed the Dart 16 as the first mass-market cat with low cost, rotomoulded hulls in 1997, Yves went to work on the Topaz 16 almost a decade later. So it's not surprising to find that the CX has taken a big step forward in terms of design, construction and performance.

While the Dart 16 can give a great introduction to catsailing, the Topaz 16 provides a different kind of sailing experience, particularly in top of the range CX mode. On the water it feels stiffer, lighter and more dynamic than any rotomoulded cat produced by Dart or Hobie, with taut feedback that qualifies as true 'performance' sailing. We're not talking about Tornado





forget any problems you may have experienced with older style cats, since the Topaz 16 tacks like a dinghy but won't fall over.

You need to push the Topaz 16 pretty hard to capsize, maybe with the spinnaker, which has clearly been designed as an integral part of the boat. If you do go over, the Topaz 16 is forgiving. Our test boat showed no inclination to invert, thanks to the sealed mast, and Richard and Ariane flipped it back up in double-quick time with a combined crew weight of less than 130kg.

### The verdict

The Topaz 16CX is the first cat to bridge the gap between low cost rotomoulded hull construction and true performance catsailing, a feat emulated by the smaller 14 Xtreme. At under £6,000 complete with kite, nothing comes close. If Topper International pushes in the right direction, the 16CX could have great prospects as a one-design racing class, equally suitable for youth and light to middle weight adult sailors. The Topaz 16S (school version) trims £1,000 off the price with a single trapeze, Dacron mainsail and no spinnaker. It's a good choice for cat novices, but novices with aspirations should go balls-out for the CX. ■

**LEFT** The Topaz 16 was designed with integral spinnaker, although a school version comes without.

**BELOW** The Topaz 16CX feels fast, stiff and responsive for a rotomoulded cat.

sensations (that requires a price tag of around £25k!), but it sure is getting close to SL16 performance (also designed by Yves Loday) with a 30 per cent price saving thanks to those rotomoulded hulls. In fact, the Topaz 16CX has all the attributes for a new international youth cat: low-cost, durable, true racing performance and fun to sail.

### On the water

What's more, the Topaz 16 is an easy boat to manage. It's straightforward to get out on the wire, whether you're the crew or helm. Control systems are well worked out, partly thanks to Brian Phipps of Windsport who has helped develop the boat with some fine-tuning. The non-slip looks like bubble-wrap and is a bit weird, but keeps your feet on the hulls. Cranking the windward hull off the water and holding it there is pretty easy - the CX has plenty of sail power, but in a Force 4 it all felt user-friendly to control. Tacking is reasonably fast and very predictable -



Thanks to Windsport on the shores of Falmouth Harbour for providing facilities for this test. [www.windsport.co.uk](http://www.windsport.co.uk) Thanks to Richard Glover (double ISAF gold medallist), Ariane Annicq and Brian Phipps for their sailing expertise.