



The IOR years

After tasting independence in New York, the return home to live with the in-laws during 1969 was something of a culture shock. Germán described it as: 'like waking up after a good dream.'

To save the situation, he began by making a comprehensive study of the International Offshore Rule. 'I was looking for things I could do to improve a rating without loss of speed. The results scared me. I found all sorts of loopholes and just couldn't believe they were all possible. I thought there must be something hidden somewhere to stop a boat from rating so low. I was drawing boats then that were seven to eight years ahead of their time, but didn't dare show them to clients. I could not believe it was possible to create boats that were so long and light, yet which had such low ratings. I finished up compromising, going somewhere in between. I felt a lot of responsibility for the guy spending that much money – and I couldn't afford a failure either.'

His first big break came immediately after the Frers family scored a class second aboard *Fjord VI* in the 1972 Bermuda Race. He began talks with Fernando Nabuco, a successful banker from Brazil yearning for success on yachting's international stage. Nabuco already owned a Swan 43 and had competed in the Admiral's Cup the previous year, where he had met the young Frers, then sailing aboard Estanislao Kocourek's *Matreo*. Now, Mr Nabuco wanted a one-off design that could win outright.

Wa Wa Too III, the resulting 53 footer, was built in alloy at Palmer Johnson. Germán travelled to the yard at Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, to complete the construction drawings. It was a useful experience. 'At S&S I had never been involved with construction, but I learned a great deal by talking to Shuff Willman, Bjorn Johansen and the PJ team.'

While there, he picked up a second customer in Chuck Kirsch, the curtain-rod king from Michigan. Chuck had seen *Wa Wa Too III* when she was nearing completion, liked what he saw, and immediately ordered a near-sistership but with more sail to cater for the light conditions so often experienced on the Great Lakes.

Smoking down-wind in the hey-day of IOR racing. This spectacular shot, taken during the 1984 Clipper Cup off Hawaii, exemplifies the close competitive racing enjoyed in those days. Here, Lou Abraham's Frers designed Australian team entry 'Challenge' keeps the fleet at bay.