



Germán Frers Jnr. *The next generation*

Germán Jnr. is certainly a chip off the old block. Now running the Frers design studio in Milan, 'Mani' as he is known within the family, is fast establishing a reputation of his own for designing fast race yachts. The nickname comes from having too many Germáns in the family. 'To avoid any confusion when sailing with my grandfather, my father was called "Man" and when I came along, they simply added the 'i.'

The similarities between father and first-born, and their purposeful strides into the upper echelons of yacht design are uncanny. At twenty-six, Germán Jnr. looked remarkably like his father did at that age, right down to the hippie hair-style. He has also inherited the same quiet, disarming but purposeful characteristics and, like his father, is a listener. 'It is extraordinary how alike the two are', says Wolter Huisman, who knows both well. 'It is even more remarkable just how similar their views are on yacht design.'

Like his father, Germán Jnr. escaped the isolation of learning his trade in Buenos Aires by going abroad, this time to study in England. 'When I was nineteen, there were just two opportunities open to 'wannabe' yacht designers: either sign up for an American postal course, or enroll at the Southampton Institute', he recalls. In reality, there was no choice, for the English college, with its Wolfson tank-testing facilities, has a world-wide reputation and is where the lines of New Zealand's 1995 America's Cup winning challenger were refined. There was one problem however: A rule that foreign students must have a diploma in English. Germán Jnr. somehow talked his way around that, and turned up in Southampton with a calculator but little else, to commence his studies in September 1989.

His first year was not a success. 'I almost flunked my exams, not because I couldn't grasp the technical issues, but because I just couldn't write them down in time. During the exams, I spent more time flicking through a dictionary than I did getting the words down on paper', he says with a rueful smile. But there is nowhere better to learn English than in Britain, for the British, being such an insular race, have little interest in foreign languages. Germán Jnr. found himself thrown in at the deep end, having to learn the lingo fast just to make himself understood, let alone pass his exams. 'His first year was certainly not a glorious one', recalls Steve Dalzell, his lecturer. 'It was not long after the Falklands War, and the culture-shock of living in a strange country and not speaking the language had a marked effect on his work.'