

for no designer, let alone a non-American architect, had counted three prizes in the Bermuda Race before. Frers proved to be just as adept at designing yachts along classic lines, such as *Alford*, a 16-Meter yawl fitted with a centerboard to cope with the shallow waters of the Plate estuary. She won the first 1,200-mile Buenos Aires–Rio Race.

The big breakthrough was *Fjord III*, a 50-foot classic designed in 1946. This one proved pivotal in establishing Frers's international reputation. She was built in something of a rush, for Frers set himself a three-month launch deadline in order to compete in that year's Buenos Aires–Rio Race. He missed the start by three days, but setting off anyway, *Fjord III* went on to set the fastest elapsed time to Rio. Two years later, she won the race outright.

Far from working in isolation, Frers made several trips to the United States and Europe, where he raced his own designs and rubbed shoulders with the likes of Olin and Rod Stephens, John Illingworth, and Uffa Fox. Frers returned home filled with fresh ideas to advance his own brand of design thinking. He turned his hand to designing a wide range of boats, from the *Batitu* junior trainer, through a succession of powerboats ranging up to 50 meters in length, to a number of small coasters.

The Bermuda Race continued to provide a happy hunting ground for Frers's own yachts. *Fjord V*, a 40-foot yawl, finished second overall and first in its class in the 1964 race. *Fjord VI*, a 43-foot sloop and one of the first offshore racers designed with a flush deck and with separate afterguard and crew cockpits, took third in its class in the 1972 classic. These forays abroad not only gave Frers the opportunity to extend his client base outside of South America, where he was already the leading architect,

but also introduced his two sons, Germán and Pepe, to the cut and thrust of international offshore racing.

Frers's eldest son Germán, who established his own reputation in the 1970's and 1980's with a succession of successful IOR and maxi race yachts, took over his father's design company in Buenos Aires. He now shares responsibility for all their racing, cruising, and super-yacht designs with his son, Germán Jr., based at the Frers Studio in Milan, Italy.

—Barry Pickthall

**GERMÁN FRERS**

Born 1941 · Argentina

Germán Frers has been involved in yacht design since his schooldays, when he filled his notebooks with sketches of boats of all types, many of which were later completed and built as sailing models.

Frers also raced small dinghies at the Club Náutico San Isidro, starting at the age of eight and winning the local championship several times. Later he raced on his father's boats both in Argentina and overseas, competing in the Buenos Aires–Rio, Bermuda, Onion Patch, Admiral's Cup, Transatlantic, and SORC races.

During those years he developed a strong interest in yacht design and worked as a draftsman at his father's office after school. The first yacht built to his plans was *Mirage*, a CCA Rule–beating 33-foot yawl which he designed in 1958 at the age of seventeen. Frers was studying naval engineering at the University of Buenos Aires when Rod Stephens heard of the budding young designer from Buenos Aires. Always on the lookout for fresh talent, he sent Frers an invitation to join the famed

design firm of Sparkman and Stephens. It was an opportunity too good to miss. Frers went to New York in 1965 expecting to stay for a year, but remained there for five. "It was a marvelous experience for me—to get away and be independent, away from being my father's boy," says Frers now. The experience also proved quite a culture shock.

The young designer found himself thrown in at the deep end. No sooner had he been shown to a drawing board than he was given the task of designing a yacht to Britain's RORC Rule. He was not helped by the fact that he knew nothing about the rule or how to work out the scantlings, nor had he any drafting tools with which to draw the lines. "At home, I had always borrowed my father's instruments. I had brought none with me. So I went out and bought some triangles and curves and borrowed the rest. I was still borrowing tools the day I left."

Recalling his apprentice, Rod Stephens said of Frers, "He was above average—a nice fellow to have in the group—attractive, pleasant, intelligent. His father was not only a good man technically, but a fine man and I think some of this rubbed off on his sons. He was fortunate to have such a father, and likewise, his father was fortunate to have a son interested in carrying on in a very competent, clever and admirable fashion."

After three years the appeal of earning \$4 an hour as a draftsman began to pale, especially with marriage on the horizon, so Frers chose to start an independent practice, setting up a design studio in a one-room apartment in Manhattan. His first commissions were for the sistership One-Tonnars *Quest* and *Wizard of Paget*. Two further designs followed, but four boats in two years was hardly enough to feed a growing family. With no sign of an end to this

famine, Frers's wife Susana decided to take their two children home to her parents in Buenos Aires, and Frers followed soon after to take charge of the design office founded in 1928 by his father.

Frers's racing yachts are believed by many to be among the best designed and best looking in the world. In 1971 *Matrero*, the first design he did after returning from New York, did well sailing in England for the Argentine Admiral's Cup team and stirred international interest in his work. The next Admiral's Cup races saw *Recluta*, also from Argentina, finishing second overall against the best international competition. Soon after, the 55-foot *Scaramouche* was having a similar effect on the western shores of the Atlantic, confirming Germán Frers as the Man of the Hour, as *Yachting* magazine was to dub him. *Scaramouche* won the 1973 Port Huron–Mackinac Race, scored a class win at the 1974 SORC, and won every race in the Onion Patch series, including that year's Bermuda Race. Suddenly, at the age of thirty-three, Frers was at the top of his profession.

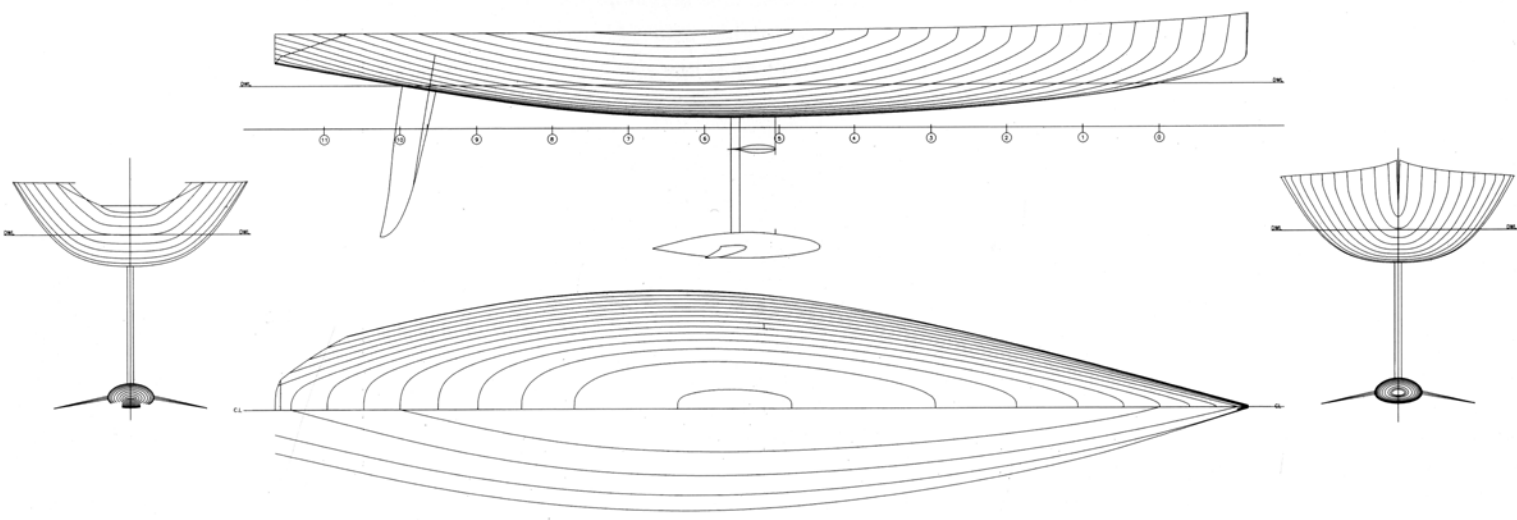
To date, Frers has drawn approximately seven hundred designs for the most famous names in offshore yachting from Europe, Britain, America, Japan, the Far East, Australia, New Zealand, and, of course, South America. Frers-designed yachts have won all the major trophies in the world, including the Admiral's Cup, Onion Patch, Bermuda Race, Transpacific, Whitbread Round the World Race, Sardinia Cup, Buenos Aires–Rio Race, Settimana delle Bocche, Two-Ton Cup World Championship, Middle Sea Race, and the Maxi World Championship. Frers is the exclusive designer for Nautor's line of Swan yachts, having created twenty new models since he started his involvement in 1979. He is also the exclusive designer for the Hallberg-Rassy line of cruising yachts.

In 1989 Frers moved to Italy to lead the *Moro di Venezia* design team in its 1992 America's Cup challenge. A considerable amount of research and development resulted in five boats, built from four designs. The third boat won the first World Championship for the new America's Cup Class in May 1991 and set the trend for all the challengers and defenders. *Il Moro di Venezia V* was the winner of the Louis Vuitton Cup in the final races against *New Zealand*, giving her the right to challenge for the America's Cup—the first European to do so.

Eight years later, Frers convinced fashion mogul Patrizio Bertelli to challenge for the America's Cup of 2000, then held by New Zealand. The Frers–Doug Peterson team produced *Luna Rossa*, the winner of the Louis Vuitton Cup after a highly contested series in which the U.S. representatives were eliminated from



**Germán Frers: Swan 112.** At 112.27-foot LOA, the Swan 112 is the largest yacht in the Nautor line. These sloops have standardized composite hulls, but otherwise are custom built. The wake gives an idea of the speed this yacht is traveling. With all-power-assisted sail handling it looks like a relaxed and effortless form of transportation. © Nautor/PPL



**Germán Frers: Il Moro V.** The lines of the 75-foot 4-inch America's Cup Class yacht *Il Moro di Venezia V* sum up the nature of the class: a lean, light, long-ended hull with the ultimate in high-tech appendages. *Il Moro* lost the finals of the 1992 America's Cup series to *America<sup>3</sup>*. Drawing courtesy Germán Frers