

SPORT



Man alone: Greg Wilcox competes in the OK Dinghy championships out of Worser Bay in Wellington.

Picture: MAARTEN HOLL

Wilcox chasing world champs dream again

■ YACHTING
JONATHAN MILLMOW

WELLINGTON sailor Greg Wilcox has his sights set on attending his 13th OK Dinghy world championship.

The 43-year-old from the Worser Bay boating club entered his first more than 20 years ago, has attended 12 times and has been crowned world champion once — in Napier in 2002.

Before that his best finish had been fourth in England in 1983

and last year he was fifth when defending his title in Goa, India.

"After I won it I thought about slowing down but I keep finding myself drawn back," Wilcox said on the opening day of this year's national championships in Wellington.

"As long as I want to do it I guess I'll keep going."

Wilcox regarded Goa as one of the more enjoyable regattas he had been to. "It was one of the best, certainly in terms of location and it was really warm and the Indians

couldn't do enough to help you."

An Indian took out the title, which may be a surprise to the uninitiated but Wilcox has great respect for any Indian who makes it on to the water.

"They've had a good deal of success in all classes," he said.

"They've got around a billion people in India but of course it is a sport for the rich."

Wilcox is in 10th place overall after five races on the first two days of this year's national championship.

His best was sixth in race five.

Predictions beforehand were for the racing to be more even this year because of a change from aluminium to carbon fibre rigs.

The top six at the end of the 10-race championship are guaranteed places for this year's world championships near Southampton in England.

Wilcox, 43, started in single-handed yachts as an 11-year-old after being drawn to them by a keen Karaka Bay sailing neighbour.

It began as a social thing and it

was not till 13 or 14 that the typical teenager gave up other sports such as cricket, soccer and badminton for the water.

He started in P-class yachts, moved into Starlings and was in the two-man 470 class in his late teens.

He learned some of his most valuable sailing lessons then, thanks to the help of wily Paremata yachtie Murray Jones. Jones, with partner Andy Knowles, was the 470 king, representing New Zealand at Olympic level.