



SALONA 38

ROGER MCMILLAN
SAILS A BOAT THAT
WAS BUILT TO BE
STRONG – AND
VERY FAST.



WE were happily sailing to windward in 12 knots of breeze and I was holding the new Salona 38 at around 40 degrees to the wind.

“Poke her up a bit,” came the instruction from the Australian agent, Matt Hayes.

Matt is a former world champion and Olympic representative and I’m not, so I did as I was told. I pushed her up to about 29 degrees and she held her speed at around 7 knots. She continued to track beautifully, with no pressure on the helm. I was impressed.

As we continued to sail around Sydney Harbour on a perfect day for a boat test, the Salona 38 showed that she is a very good replacement for the Salona 37, which won both European and US Yacht of the Year Awards. This is an excellent racer/cruiser which will have a significant impact on the club racing scene.

DESIGNED FOR SPEED

At the recent Olympics, there were plenty of boats with CRO on their sails that were near the front of the fleet. The beautiful Croatian coastline encourages sailing, and the design team at AD Boats in Split obviously knows how to create a production boat that will go fast.

One of the features of the Salona 38 is that there are plenty of options, so you can buy an all-out race boat or a comfortable cruiser. The boat we were sailing leans towards the racing side, with carbon spars and racing sails, but the basic cruising boat will also get you to your destination quickly and safely.

The racing package was enhanced

when leading designer Jason Ker was called in to optimise the keel for peak performance. Among the options is a “factory design package” that allows the boat you choose to be optimised for IRC or ORCi handicaps, marrying the correct keel with the correct sail package for your specific needs. Draft options include 1.75m, 1.98m and 2.28m.

Other elements that show the racing pedigree are the lightweight twin wheels and the huge cockpit, which provides plenty of space for a full racing crew to work unimpeded – or for a cruising couple to entertain guests in style when at anchor in a secluded bay.

At less than 30 degrees to the wind, there is a fair bit of heel, which is where another racing element comes into its own – the helmsman’s pop-up steps which are very similar to the ones I watched Iker Martinez using effectively on the big Volvo 70 *Telefonica*. Without the step, helming from the windward side was difficult. As soon as the step was deployed, it became very easy. As I said, this boat tracks beautifully, both to windward and downhill so helming is a pleasure not a chore.

BUILT STRONG

You may think that a boat which is built for speed will be built ultra-light. In the Salona case, you would be wrong. Matt Hayes describes the Salona 38 as “over-engineered” and a close examination of the building technique shows that he’s right.

The key element is a stainless steel frame. As well as exceeding Germanische Lloyd legal requirements for Design Category A

ABOVE: Hard on the wind the Salona likes to point high.

ABOVE RIGHT: The optional carbon prood allows deployment of asymmetric sails.

MAIN: Sleek and fast - the Salona 38 on home waters



TOP: Lots of daylight below, and room for a party,

ABOVE LEFT: The galley is well-finished and provides lots of bench space.

TOP RIGHT: The comfortable "pipe berth" unfolded.

(Ocean), the frame makes the boat exceedingly stiff, which leads to good upwind performance.

Carbon is then added in key areas to increase both strength and stiffness. Then the hull membranes are added using the same technique as is used in Airbus construction. The "slamming zone" (the area that failed in several of the Volvo 70s) is made from a single-skin composite, which gets around the problem of individual fibres failing owing to constant battering in big seas.

Finally, the aft and bow bulkheads are made completely watertight, so in the unlikely event of hull puncture, the boat will continue to float until the hole can be plugged and the water pumped out.

Overall the displacement (empty) is only

6500kg, of which 2270kg is in the bulb. It is a relatively light boat, but one that is extremely strong.

ON DECK

As mentioned, the cockpit is large – probably the biggest among production boats of this size. There are plenty of stowage areas for lifejackets, fenders and assorted paraphernalia and easy access to the swim platform is a good feature.

The boat we were sailing was fitted with teak throughout the cockpit and the side-decks. While obviously there will be a weight penalty with such extensive use of a heavy material, the visual impact is stunning. This is a seriously good-looking boat.

I was surprised at the small diameter of the various lines on board. While modern ropes are much stronger than they used to be for a given diameter, this is definitely a boat on which you would wear gloves.

One nice design touch is the mainsheet "well", which keeps the traveller below deck level. When at anchor, the cover is put on and everything is tidy and out of the way.

The deck fittings are generous – three winches each side and eight jammers, providing easy handling of all sailing gear. There is an optional carbon prodder from which an asymmetric can be flown, and a symmetric with spinnaker pole is part of the "performance package".

It is obvious that the design team included at least one person who has done a lot of sailing and at least one person who has an eye for style – the deck is very functional but the boat is also very aesthetic.

SAILS AND STUFF

There are so many options available that there's not much point in covering them all here. You can opt for manual or hydraulic backstay adjuster, sails in Dacron, Pentex, Spectra or whatever material fits your needs and budget... Effectively, you tell Matt Hayes what your main use will be (IRC, twilights, family cruising or whatever) and he will advise on the rig and sail package most suited to your needs.

The test boat, set up for club racing, had everything that was needed to make it perform, yet the set-up was simple and she was easy to sail well.

BELOW DECK

It is hard to find anything new to say about today's production boats once you've stepped down the companionway. Let's face it, there are only a few ways you can lay out a cabin.

Below decks the Salona is not huge. The team who designed the hull didn't go for a hard chine, which results in extra volume, but everything you need is there.

Once again, there is an enormous range of options, including two cabins or three. Neither the forepeak nor the aft cabin on the test boat are huge, but they are more than adequate for a good night's sleep. The forepeak, in particular, has excellent light from three hatches and also features two hanging lockers.

The test boat is set up for racing, and one nice touch is the "pipe berth" that can be rigged in the main cabin. This is a far cry from the uncomfortable cots of offshore racers, instead being a comfortable berth that

just happens to hang down, making excellent use of the available space because it can be tucked away when not in use.

The Salona advertising material quite rightly points out that "having an extra drawer in the kitchen" is not a "spectacular reason why you should pay more attention to our fleet". Suffice to say that whatever options you choose, you can create an excellent galley and a very comfortable nav station in the space provided. The galley offers plenty of surface area for food preparation and enough storage room, while the main cabin has a large U shape bench seat that converts into a double bunk, and there is more storage underneath.

OWNER'S COMMENTS

The test boat was imported for Richard Harris, who does club races and short offshore from Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club on Sydney's Pittwater. Richard won the twilight Spring Series with his previous boat, a Bavaria 36, and he describes himself as "quite competitive".

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA (hull)	11.50 m
LWL	10.15 m
Beam	3.62 m
Draft	1.75 / 1.98 / 2.28 m
Ballast	2270 kg
Displacement	6500 kg
Mainsail full batten	45.50 m ²
Genova furling	42.90 m ²
Sail area total	88.40 m ²
Fresh water tank	180 litres
Black water tank	42 litres
Fuel tank	100 litres
Engine	21.3 kW (29.1 HP)
Design category	A - Ocean
CE Certification	Germanischer Lloyd

FIGURE 1

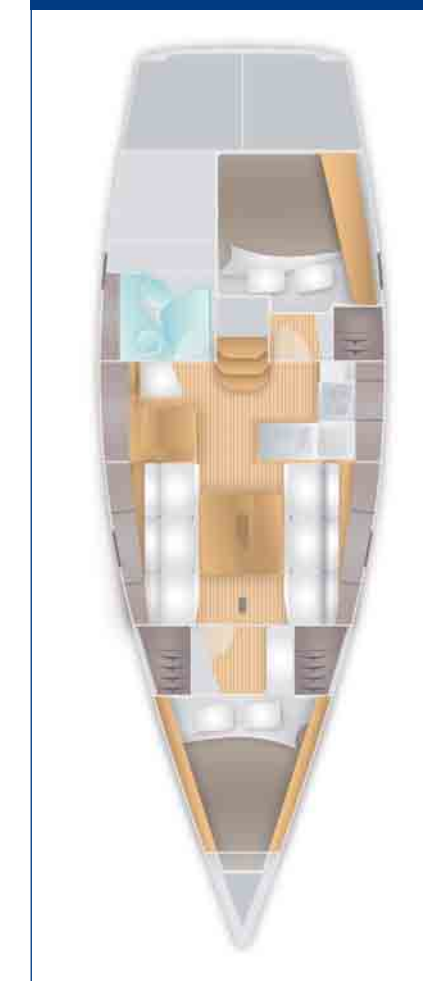
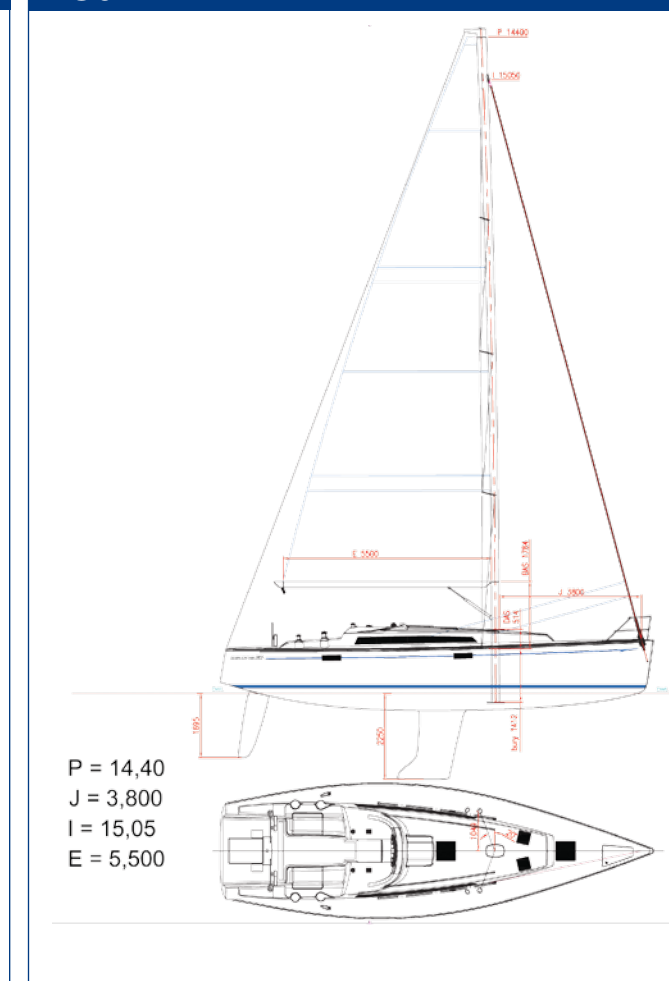


FIGURE 2



THE FRAME MAKES THE BOAT EXCEEDINGLY STIFF, WHICH LEADS TO GOOD UPWIND PERFORMANCE.



The large cockpit works for both racing and cruising.

"I wanted something with a bit more room and a bit more performance," he said, when asked why he chose the Salona. "Something that would go a bit quicker and provide more comfort for racing and cruising.

"The Salona fitted that (description) in that it's at the performance end of production boats. It (AD Boats) is at the small end of the production companies so I could change some things. It's a blend of production slash custom," he said.

Among the custom features Richard chose is that the toe rail runs only from the bow to the mast. "It complies with safety regulations but if you're sitting on the rail for a while you don't lose circulation in your legs. There were lots of little things, like the freezer, they were very accommodating with other changes," Richard said.

At time of writing Richard had raced only once, but was satisfied with the performance. "We were able to benchmark ourselves against similar boats," he reported.

The Salona 38 is as far from a "floating caravan" as you can get. But it provides more than enough luxury, along with the speed you need to get you to your destination ahead of most boats of its size. That's a pretty powerful combination in a boat that starts at \$268,000.

For more information or a test sail, contact Matt Hayes at US Yachts, phone (02) 9281 4422 or visit www.usyachts.com.au. *