

Build on the rock

Sydney Yachts builds on the success of its 38 with a cruiser/racer version, by Vanessa Dudley

THERE'S a lot of cleverness about the Sydney 39CR. It's a Sydney 38 hull with a different deck, which makes a world of difference to the space and comfort below decks. The rig includes a slightly stronger mast section and mast-head chutes but otherwise the same sail plan, which means tuning guides and knowledge accumulated by sailors and sailmakers on their fifth or sixth generation of Sydney 38 sails can be transferred directly to the 39, without having to fund development from scratch.

It also has the same keel but a slightly bigger rudder, to make steering that little bit more manageable for owners who may not be as experienced as their Sydney 38 counterparts.

The Australian builder Sydney Yachts has produced an incredible 65 of the Sydney 38s over the past five years. Designed by Murray, Burns & Dovell, the 38s have transformed the face of the Australian keelboat racing scene in the process, adding class fleets to most of the big events from the Whitsundays regattas and Geelong to the Sydney to Hobart and Pittwater to Coffs races.

The 38s have the runs on the board as solid boats that don't break easily off-shore. Veteran Sydney Hobart racer Bruce Taylor of Melbourne, whose *Cbutzpab* won the Sydney 38 division of the most recent Rolex Sydney Hobart, a long, hard windward slog, said on arrival: "The boats are fantastic, just good all-round boats. They don't seem to have any vices; not fantastically exciting as a yacht, but very conservatively built. With our other *Cbutzpabs* we were always wondering whether we were going to get there, in 24 years we dropped seven masts. These are just well-built, good quality boats and the fun with them is there are just so many to sail against."

The 39CR offers the same hull lines and sturdy construction, minus the one-design racing benefits but with a better IRC rating and far more comfort for cruising and deliveries. And who knows, as numbers grow there could be the opportunity to race 39CR on 39CR, with three boats now launched and three more on order, four of the six for Australia and two for export to Europe.

The first 39CR, John and Lyndall Bacon's *Hussy*, was launched in time for last year's big events in northern Queensland, where



Sydney 38 hull takes on a new look with the 39's deck and hull-windows (Vanessa Dudley pictures).

it won the IRC cruising division of Hog's Breath Race Week and placed fifth in the same category of Hahn Premium Race Week at Hamilton Island.

In a testimonial email to the builders, John Bacon said: "I think we have shown the 39CR is very competitive under IRC in both light and heavy conditions. I should also point out that the sails we used in both Hogs Breath and Hamilton regattas were Norths Pentex (non-exotic material) which had been on the boat for 1000 miles. They are actually destined to be our cruising/twilight sails and we will only take delivery of a full set of Norths 3DL racing sails later in the year."

At Christmas *Hussy* raced in the Strathfield Pittwater to Coffs Harbour Race, with Sydney Yacht's marketing man Martin Thompson aboard. Thompson said: "We beat the first Sydney 38 by about an hour, and the 39 rates significantly better. The boat is faster upwind; it's a heavier boat, and it's faster downwind with a masthead chute."

Hussy finished fifth overall in the race to Coffs Harbour and fourth overall in the Pittwater & Coffs Harbour series, sailing with an IRC handicap of 1.103. Standard Sydney 38s, by comparison, race on an IRC handicap of 1.112.

So much for racing. What about the cruising side of the equation, given the

emphasis placed on this by the "CR" in the yacht's title? John Bacon told Sydney Yachts, "Lyndall and I left Hamilton Island after the regatta with another couple to spend a week in the islands south of the Whitsundays and had a fantastic time. The gear installed including the 12 volt fridge certainly made life comfortable."

"The delivery from Sydney to Airlie Beach only took us six days and the return passage from Southport to Sydney was done two-handed in just 43 hours, averaging nearly 10 knots! This trip was running conditions in 25-40kts of northerlies and apart from the occasional steer for fun, the B&G pilot steered the boat without fault the whole way."

"I never would have believed that a 39ft cruising boat could effortlessly surf at 14-16kts for hundreds of metres at a time totally under the control of a pilot. It was pretty amazing to be down below at night with absolutely no sense of speed, watching the log on the nav station regularly go from a minimum of 9kts to peaks of 16kts."

At a base price of \$395,000 ex sails and instruments, the 39 is almost \$50,000 more than the Sydney 38. "The majority of that difference is in the interior," Thompson says. It is also more expensive than many of the imported European cruiser/racers of comparable size, which he attributes to the standard of the fitout

and inclusions. "We are trying to be really up-front in putting the best on the boats; we do Vectran halyards and good quality running rigging so the owners don't have to replace all the ropes in the first year at full retail; it costs us an extra \$3000 for custom carbon chainplates which are completely external so there's no leakage problems in that area."

But there is more than just the standard specification to distinguish the Sydney 39 from imported yachts. It's a distinctly local solution to the cruiser/racer compromise and the Australian predilection for performance sailing and racing.

According to Martin Thompson, the yacht reflects the changing nature of sailing itself as a sport and pastime. "You can see it with the popularity of twilight racing; owners want two hours of intense good fun. We need to deliver a boat that can sail one week with three people onboard, then the next week with 15. It needs to be very user friendly, with a big cockpit. We also put a 'twilight fridge' onboard as well as the big top-opening ice chest, recognising that the boats are normally hooked up to shore power.

"The boat has a stereo system, timber finishes, all as standard. We wanted to

make a step forward, take the boat to a new standard, and we wanted the aesthetics to look good, too; the control lines are run under the deck where possible."

Nonetheless, Thompson says: "It's still perceived as a race boat. The biggest challenge is to get people inside. Then they go 'Wow, it's really nice!'"

On deck

Like the 38, the 39CR is set up with a keel-stepped aluminium fractional mast with two sets of swept-back spreaders and non-

overlapping headsails. The 39's mast is a stiffer section for the same weight, with an external track for the mainsail, allowing the use of more cruising-orientated roller cars and a captive luff.

The aluminium boom is set up with two reef lines and a cascade outhaul system and is supported by a Selden telescopic adjustable boom vang with gas strut. There's a twin groove Tuff Luff head-foil for the jibs, and a hydraulic backstay which is manually adjusted at a control panel at the forward end of the cockpit.



RIGHT: Looking aft in the saloon (Sydney Yachts picture).

BELOW: Big wheel and cockpit remain distinctive features.



Spinnaker gear is included as standard, with a spun tapered pole set on a mast track with RCB car and butt lift system.

Running rigging consists of Vectran mainsail and genoa halyards, double braid polyester sheets, control lines and spinnaker halyards, and Dyneema spinnaker braces.

The winches are a pair of two-speed Harken 44 self-tailers for the mainsheet system (led along the boom to the mast and then aft under the deck, with a traveller on the cockpit floor just forward of the steering wheel), two two-speed Harken 46STs as primaries and two two-speed 40STs for the halyards and control lines, which lead to Spinlock jammers. On *Hussy* the port side mainsheet winch is fitted with the optional electric drive to make life easier when cruising or on short-handed deliveries.

Sydney Yacht's big and distinctive "signature" steering wheel, of composite construction and recessed into the cockpit floor, allows the steerer to stand or sit to windward or leeward with great vision and there are foot chocks to provide a solid footing when required.

The open transom houses a stainless steel swim ladder, and there is provision for a big teak table to be set up in the cockpit.

There is less cockpit space on the 39CR than the 38, because the coach-house extends further aft, but this is still a generous space compared to most of the imported cruiser/racers in this size range.

The standard specification includes a bulkhead mounted Plastimo Contest 130 steering compass. *Hussy* also has B&G electronic instruments and autopilot and a Simrad chartplotter.

Below decks

The 39CR feels positively cavernous compared to the Sydney 38 when you step down the companionway. The accommodation is designed to meet IRC requirements.

To port is an L-shaped galley with sink, pressurised hot and cold water supply, two-burner stove and oven, ice box with 12 volt refrigeration and galley equipment storage space in cupboards above and below.

Hussy has black Corian bench tops for the galley, with polished metal cupboard

doors, which all looks great but may not be everyone's choice. Co-owner Lyndall Bacon is an interior designer and she and her husband were able to have a lot of input into the interior of *Hussy* during construction; this capacity for customisation sets the 39CR apart from most of the imported cruiser/racers in its size range.

Forward of the galley is a modular U-shaped settee with a teak timber table finished in high gloss, while the starboard side of the saloon provides two single settee seats with a teak coffee table between.

Aft of these is the navigation area, conventionally styled with a bench seat, chart table and space for mounting nav equipment and electronics. The base of the table holds the aforementioned front-opening Isotherm "twilight fridge".

There is a 12 volt DC electrical switch panel with circuit breakers, battery voltmeter and charging gauge (the two house and one engine batteries are sealed and Category 1 compliant for offshore racing), an ICOM VHF radio and Clarion marine CD/radio with speakers in the saloon and the cockpit.

Besides the opening hatches and

Specifications

Length overall	11.73m
Waterline length	12.35m
Beam maximum	3.75m
Draft	2.65m
Displacement.....	5250 kg

Base price: \$395,000 ex sails and instruments.
Construction: Hull and deck laminates are of cored construction using vinyl ester and polyester resin. One-piece GRP laminated structural grid designed to incorporate the keel attachment, mast step, engine mount and rudder bearing for strength and durability. Vacuum bagged composite and ply bulkheads.
Keel: High lift, low centre of gravity lead keel with bulb. Keel is linked to floors and internal plates with stainless steel bolts.
Rudder: Balanced spade composite rudder and fully sealed roller bearings top and bottom.
Water capacity: 200lt
Fuel capacity: 120lt
Engine: Yanmar 30hp diesel engine with saildrive and two-blade Briski folding propeller.
Designer: Murray Burns & Dorell
Builder: Sydney Yachts International, Nowra, NSW. Sales office, Newport, NSW, tel (02) 9979 8044; website: www.sydneyyachts.com.au.



Fast reaching in light airs.



LEFT: The owners' cabin in the aft starboard quarter (Sydney Yachts picture).

FAR LEFT: More room to relax in the 39CR's saloon.

coachhouse windows there are also hull windows in the main saloon which are distinctively styled for the 39CR and big sister the 47CR, while providing a clearer view of the outside world from the saloon.

Forward is a double vee-berth which can double as a sail storage space and a reasonably large bathroom with manual toilet, vanity basin, pressure hot/cold water and shower. A holding tank with deck discharge is included as standard.

The big owners' double cabin fills the starboard aft quarter and includes a hanging locker and storage space, while the portside aft cabin can be used as a storage area for boat gear or as additional accommodation space.

The interior is attractively presented with exposed moulded surfaces finished with high gloss gelcoat and timber trim, while padded hull liners are also used on the walls of the forward and aft cabins and the floor is traditionally styled teak with black epoxy.

Performance

The Sydney 38 has well and truly established itself as a capable, modern all-rounder which is challenging to race well in competitive one-design fleets. It's fast and exciting to sail downwind in a breeze, though in the fresh stuff in a seaway it does become quite pigheaded and demanding to steer under spinnaker.

My own experience racing on 38s from

Sydney to Lord Howe Island, Southport and Mooloolaba has led me to the opinion that it's certainly a strongly built and seaworthy boat, bulletproof even. It's not favourably handicapped under IRC, but offers great class racing.

Sharing the same hull, the 39CR cleverly combines the 38's performance characteristics with a bigger rudder that should help keep control at the top end of the range. The weight of the cruising deck and interior isn't enough to turn the boat into a slug in light air, while settling the yacht in stronger upwind conditions and contributing to a better IRC handicap.

And then there's the interior; not as functional for racing as the 38's (which has its own shortcomings for passage racing), but much, much more comfortable, spacious and better equipped for cruising or simply sitting around in after sailing.

When cruising, the 39CR is unlikely to have eight or nine crew swinging her down on the windward rail, but the rig plan with its non-overlapping headsail and capacity to reef the main or set up a smaller cruising main will allow the boat to be managed effectively short-handed, aided by the addition of electric winch power in the case of *Hussy*.

The early performances of *Hussy* have been pleasing for the owners and builders and having sailed on the boat on a couple of occasions now, I could find no performance deficiencies to criticise. It's a pleas-



Tall rig plan for a cruiser.

ure to steer with the big composite wheel, easy to move around and the deck layout works well.

Overall, the Sydney 39CR is a clever and fresh approach to the challenge of providing a cruising boat for racing sailors.