

Premier cruiser

Winning the Premier Cruising class at Hahn Premium Race Week is a great introduction, by Vanessa Dudley

WHAT A DIFFERENCE 11 seconds can make to the shared mood of a sailboat crew. I'm aboard the new Sydney 47 *Gomez* (as rail meat) for the final day of Hahn Premium Race Week. A great start, sensible strategy and tactics, error-free crew work and an impressive turn of speed have seen us around the Lindeman Island course in good shape, but now it looks like the Beneteau First 47.7 *Eagle Rock* will make it to the finish line behind us in time to grab the honours on IRC corrected time. We wait near the finish line with the stopwatches out, because the overall result of the Premier Cruising division hinges on this margin.

Gomez co-owners Steve and Mary Chiodo are shaking hands with all of the crew, and I hear Mary say "It's been a great regatta, no matter how this works out". Meanwhile, Sydney Yachts marketing man Martin Thompson is running the calculations over and over in his head and looking worried, and a black cloud has descended over Sydney Yachts' general manager Darren Williams, *Gomez's* tactician for the series, who is sitting slumped at the transom. "It's more than just a race, it's been 18 months of my life," he says to me when I mouth some platitude about great racing.

Gomez and the smaller Sydney 39, *Hussy*, are the first fruit of a push by Australia's biggest production yacht builder to bring custom craft values to performance hulls. Both boats look new and different and good enough to turn heads all week here at Hamilton Island. *Hussy* won her division at Hog's Breath Race Week and a win here for *Gomez* would be the icing on the cake.

What makes things worse is that the yacht could have nailed the regatta the previous day, when she held a dominant lead right up to the finish line. In light airs, roaring tide and a gaggle of cruising yachts, she was carried to the wrong side of the buoy and had to drop the spinnaker

Cockpit is generously proportioned and uncluttered (pictures courtesy of Sydney Yachts).

and claw back against the current, losing minutes and dropping to fourth as a result.

When we arrive back at the dock the mood is still heavy with apprehension. As a blow-in just for this race, and actually feeling pretty cheerful after an enjoyable sail on this very impressive boat, it's time I'm out of here.

Barely 10 minutes later I see some of the crew wearing broad smiles on the way to buy some bubbly. It's official, *Gomez* has nudged *Eagle Rock* out of first place in the race and the series by a mere 11 seconds. Damn, I should have stayed onboard for the celebrations! Though I suspect it won't be the last time the champagne corks fly aboard *Gomez*, and other boats produced in Sydney Yachts' new "CR" (cruiser/racer) line.

The concept

It's interesting to compare the Sydney 47 with the big contingent of Beneteau First 47.7s she raced against at Hamilton Island, because the differences relate to the concept of the Australian-built yacht. Sydney Yachts says it has developed the new CR range "to meet the increasing market demand for speed and comfort. The Sydney 47CR provides a superb level of interior finish but does not compromise on performance."

Designed by Murray, Burns & Dovell in Sydney, the 47 is a narrower boat than the First 47.7, so it has less interior space but is quicker with the potential for more excitement downwind. The cockpit is longer proportionally, again making inroads on interior space but enhancing the sailing experience, while the hull is substantially lighter (8500kg versus 11,500kg, according to the published specs), making it more easily driven without resorting upwind to the big overlapping genoas carried by the 47.7.

There's no doubt that the Sydney 47 puts more emphasis than the First 47.7 on the "racer" part of the racer/cruiser equation. Its initial rating of 1.184 under the IRC is evidently very competitive (closest competitor *Eagle Rock* sailed with a TCC of 1.137).

What should also be mentioned, however, is that there were nine First 47.7s racing in the Premier Cruising class at Hamilton Island, allowing for great near one-design racing as a fleet within the fleet.

On the cruising side of the equation, the First 47.7 offers a cavernous interior with five layout alternatives, while the Sydney 47 has a lighter and brighter saloon and feels more like a custom craft, reflecting the development of the custom build facility at Sydney Yachts over the past few years. *Gomez* has a galley that looks like it's straight out of the latest trendy inner-city apartment with gleaming metal bench tops and appliances, indicat-



Looking forward in the main saloon of *Gomez*.

ing the level of customisation possible on this model.

Interior style

The Sydney 47's accommodation, designed to IRC requirements, has three double cabins in the standard layout, plus a main saloon fitted with a dinette and saloon table to port and saloon/coffee table seating area to starboard, doubling as the navigation area. The hull windows provide outside views from the settee, and the boat seems well served with storage space throughout.

There is an L-shaped galley to port of the companionway, opposite the main bathroom, and a second bathroom is provided as an ensuite to the forward cabin.

The standard specification offers a two burner Origo 6000 stove with oven and two circular stainless steel sinks, large capacity icebox with 12v refrigeration, and the standard specification is for Corian benchtops.

A moulded engine cover incorporates the companionway steps with laminated timber treads. The standard engine specification is for a Yanmar 4JH3CE 56hp four-cylinder diesel with saildrive, two-blade folding propeller and 50-amp alternator, plus CAV filtrap fuel filter/water separator.

The forward cabin offers a double vee berth with a hanging locker to starboard (opening to reveal not the yachting jackets, but the sheets and braces, neatly coiled ready for the next race). There is also storage space for assorted gear in three deep shelves and a small bench top with handrails and shelving.

The ensuite bathroom to port houses a manual Jabsco toilet, a hand basin with mixer tap which doubles as the shower nozzle, shallow shelves on the outboard side, with mirrors on the doors.

Timber frames inset around the cabin windows and hatches are a nice touch

throughout the interior. There are a couple of these in the forward cabin, as well as a round overhead hatch.

In the saloon, the chart table to starboard, of highly lacquered timber, lifts outboard in a transverse direction rather than fore and aft, part of the compromise struck between maximising lounge space and keeping the navigator happy.

The navigation instruments are on the outboard wall beside the table: on *Gomez* there are VHF and HF radios, VDO Map 11c GPS plotter, and AM/FM tuner/CD player. The electrics panel is aft of the nav seat, behind a folding glass door. There is provision for both 12v and 240v power, fuel and water tank meters, bilge pump fuses and auto/manual switches, and a MasterVolt combi system (inverter/charger).

Rig and deck layout

While the standard high aspect rig is a custom Whalespar aluminium tapered mast with double spreaders and dyform rigging, anodised aluminium boom and spinnaker pole, *Gomez* sports a carbon fibre rig from the Victorian company Applied Composites. The keel-stepped mast is set up with two sets of swept-back spreaders, and a North Sails inventory.

The standard specs include a Tuff Luff forestay and custom running rigging of Vectran, Spectra and braided polyester lines. The stainless steel pushpit, pulpit and stanchions are all custom fabricated in-house at Sydney Yachts' Nowra, NSW factory.

The dual steering system with twin moulded pedestals is also an in-house creation featuring the builder's signature composite moulded steering wheels, like the ones you've seen on the Sydney 38s. The twin wheels allow excellent visibility for the steerer plus easy access through to the transom for boarding, and there are decent footbraces for the steerer.

Boat Review: Sydney 47 CR



LEFT: Forward cabin in cruise mode.

ABOVE: Nav station to starboard in the saloon (pictures courtesy of Sydney Yachts).

Gomez is set up with large Suunto steering compasses, lots of Ronstan/Frederiksen fittings and winches by Lewmar. The mainsail winches are two-speed 54s, and the one on the port side is electric-powered. The primary winches are three-speed Lewmar 60s, while the coachhouse winches are 48s.

The cockpit and decks are very spacious for racing or just lounging around. Attention has been paid to concealing lines and hardware wherever possible to keep the decks clean and obstacle-free. The halyards and control lines run under

the coachhouse and the mainsheet runs under the sidedecks.

There are Spinlock XX0812 clutches on the coachhouse for the outhaul, tacking line, halyards and reefing lines. The boom vang is a sturdy Selden Rodkicker. The tweaker, jib car and kicker control lines all lead down the sidedeck to turning blocks and cleats beside the primary winches.

At the transom, there is a hydraulic backstay ram and control console by Fleet Hydrol, plus cockpit lockers in the aft seats. Engine controls and instruments are

on the starboard side of the cockpit, while the throttle is to port.

Performance


At Hamilton Island, with no restrictions imposed on the IRC rated divisions for crew numbers or weight, *Gomez* raced mostly with 13 or 14 crew. The boat could be easily handled with a fraction of this number, but the extra righting moment gained by all that rail meat certainly helps on the race course.

In a series of mostly light to moderate conditions and 8-15kts wind, *Gomez* went

around the courses generally anywhere from seven to 18 minutes faster than the best of the Beneteau 47.7s on elapsed times of around three hours. While assisted by a Sydney Yachts "works team", the boat was steered throughout the series by owner Steve Chiodo and crewed by his wife Mary and their regular crew from Brighton Yacht Club.

On the day I was fortunate enough to sail onboard, the Lindeman Island passage race included a good slice of upwind beating, two-sail reaching and a long run home with winds of 5-15kts, and we finished within 15 minutes of the line honours winner *Rubino* (a 20m Judel/Vrolijk cruiser), just 15 seconds behind the Sydney 60, *Eureka II*, and just over a minute ahead of the quick 17m cruiser/racer *Espresso Forte*.

Gomez felt lively and powered up to windward and was able to make good ground downwind under the big mast-head symmetrical spinnaker as the breeze softened.

The following week, the new 47 also took out the IRC title at the Hayman Island Regatta. Not a bad way to start out, both for Steve and Mary Chiodo with their beautiful new yacht, and for Sydney Yachts with their brand new CR range. 

Specifications

Length overall	14.20m
Beam maximum	4.07m
Draft	3.15m
Displacement	8500kg
Sail area Main & foretriangle	116sq m

Base price: \$729,000 ex factory

Construction: Built in accordance with American Bureau of Shipping Guide for Building and Classing Offshore Yachts. Hull is laminated with vinylester and polyester resin using E glass unidirectional, triaxial and biaxial fabric. Hull and deck are fully cored with end grain balsa. Deck is E-Glass laminate with high density foam core for deck fittings. GRP moulded main structural bulkhead, glassed fore and aft on hull and deck for optimum stiffness. All secondary bulkheads are vacuum bagged composite. Moulded GRP structural floors and longitudinals. Moulded GRP structural grid incorporating uni-directional fibres to carry rig and keel loads. Moulded carbon composite chainplates.

Keel: Cast SGI steel fin and lead bulb for high lift, low centre of gravity linked to floors and internal plates with stainless steel bolts.

Rudder: Balanced composite spade with stainless steel stock and rudder bearings.

Water capacity: 240lt

Fuel capacity: 120lt

Engine: Yanmar 4JH3CE 56hp four cylinder diesel saildrive.

Designer: Murray, Burns & Dovell.

Builder: Sydney Yachts, Newport, NSW, tel (02) 9979 8044; website: www.sydneyyachts.com.



TOP: *Gomez* during the South Molle Island Race at Hamilton Island, which it won on IRC by 10 minutes in Premier Cruising division (Vanessa Dudley picture).

ABOVE: Custom composite twin wheels allow easy through access to and from the transom (Sydney Yachts picture).