

Hunter gatherer

Some American boatbuilders have not moved down the same path as most European builders, retaining the old style cosy nook interior which **Phillip Ross** finds suits the owner of this Hunter 50.

The owner of this Hunter 50 came via a long racing history. The story of how he chose Hunter from US Yachts in Sydney and what he thinks of his choice makes interesting reading.

Tasmanian born and bred, Rodney Smart has sailed most of his life. In fact he used to race so frequently it was like an obsession, "racing cost me the first wife so I decided it was not going to cost me the second."

So the search began for a suitable yacht they could both cruise comfortably double-handed.

Nook versus open plan

Growing older and wiser Smart slowly increased the length of his cruising boats. Originally sailing around home waters of Tasmania in a Jarkan 35 he moved on to a Beneteau 423 then was taken with the Hunter 45.

The latter he kept for three years enjoying the warmth of its interior. When Matt Hayes, the Hunter Australia agent from US Yachts, spoke to him about the Hunter 50 he was happy to take a look, "the 45 had proved itself to me and that was enough to trade up."



"It's a big boat," said Smart, "and it set me back a bit. I was a bit nervous about manoeuvring and jumping on and off." The four ton of added weight from the 45 footer to the 50 footer was a concern until Matt Hayes convinced him on the ease of a bow and stern thruster.

Coming in either an aft or centre cockpit version the large bodied Hunter has two or three cabins in the centre cockpit or three and four cabins in the aft cockpit model. Smart opted for the standard aft cockpit three cabin layout.

The forward master cabin includes a separate shower port side from the starboard head while the head for the port aft cabin is a walk-through to the main saloon.

One curious feature, that Smart could not avail himself of, is the option to include a hot tub cleverly placed under the master bed. It is only available in the centre cockpit model.

A 50 foot yacht is large and Hunter's are renowned wide beamed boats. But down below, the Hunter 50 appears quite cosy. This may be due to the large L-shaped galley to starboard and the dedicated navigation station opposite to port cutting into the expanse of the cabin area. Forward is the lounge to port and the large U-shaped saloon to starboard, both with wide shelving behind. This use of spacious seating areas and dedicated sections makes the interior appear a cosy nook feel. I have to say the navigator's seat has to rank as one of the most comfiest seats I have ever sat on.

Another added upside is the generous amount of storage space available.

Hunter outruns the hunted

The owner of our test boat, Rodney Smart, was also impressed with the Hunter's speed.

Coming from a racing background it was

important to him that the boat sailed well and fast. "We did a delivery from Sydney to Hobart at the same time as a 40 foot catamaran and we left it way behind," Smart enthused.

Smart got the shallow draught model specifically for Tassie waters. "It still points at 35 to 40 degrees on seven knots easy, without losing cruiseability.

"The 50 doesn't round up, it doesn't point really high either but it can handle a lot of sail."

Matt Hayes also likes to dispel the myth that has long been held by many sailors over the years, "this boat is built for yachties." Not only for its sailing ability but also it's cruiser friendly layout below.

Standard equipment includes Raymarine navigation, Selden spars with a Furler 300 genoa and a standard Yanmar 56 kilowatt engine; Smart upgraded for the 82kw engine as added security.

Down below is a Princess three burner stove and oven, Corian bench tops with stainless steel grab rails and a twin fridge box with Dometic refrigeration. According to Smart "the boat comes with four fridges and freezers, one too many for us so we use it for plates and cup storage!"

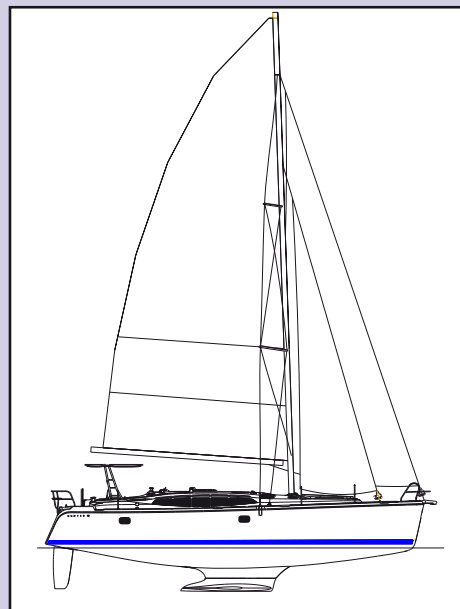
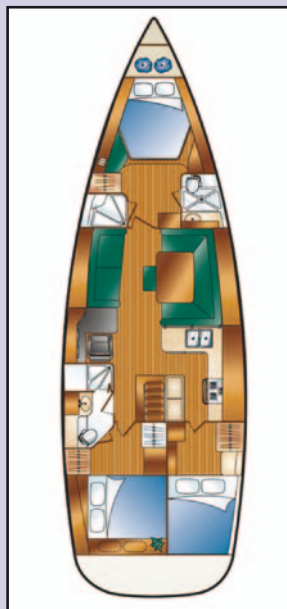
The Hunter's deep bilge is well-laid out and accessible hull fittings and fuel/water tanks run along the centre line. The forward locker is a collision bulkhead constructed with Kevlar roving inlaid in the hull.

Given his concerns with being older and needing to keep control of his yacht Smart has a folding Gori propellor with overdrive which has

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN OPPOSITE: Sitting evenly in the water with the B&R rig clearly defined; Cool mood lighting for night time; Forward main cabin with extensive lighting, air conditioning, sound speakers and headroom; Reaching at hull speed showing no sign of digging the hull in.

BASE MODEL SPECIFICATIONS (METRIC)

Length: 15.24
LWL: 13.41
Beam: 4.5
Draught: 2.13
Displacement: 13338
Ballast: 5088
P: 15.73
E: 6.65
Sail Area: 118.64
Sail area:Displacement (sq ft:cub ft): 21.45
Displacement:Length (tons:LWL): 154.11
Ballast:Displacement (lbs): 0.38
Capsize screen number: 1.92
Ted Brewer's Comfort Ratio: 27.33
Saloon headroom at mast: 2.06
Base boat price: \$500,000
Fuel: 568
Water: 757



Laid out, secure galley walk through to starboard double cabin;



ABOVE: Looking aft from owner's cabin showing separate shower area and head.

proved excellent with 1900rpm giving him 6.5 to 7 knots.

Hayes notes that Hunters are built under US rules with stringent fire safety rules: four CO₂ sensors at the engine with fire suppression switches near engine and wheel plus smoke detectors in each cabin.

Driving the Hunter 50s new hull design is an easily-driven sail plan maintaining the Hunter trademark of single-handed sailability. Components include the mainsheet traveler arch, backstayless B&R rig, a battened full roach mainsail and two headsail

options: single self-tacking jib or self-tacking staysail with overlapping jib.

A dual-ended mainsheet allows adjustments from both the cockpit and companionway and all sheets and halyards end at the cockpit.

Coming from a racing background Smart was initially sceptical of in-mast furling, but found it to work exceedingly well, "I'm converted now".

On the water

Taking this boat out for a spin on Sydney Harbour was certainly an uncomplicated affair. Roller furlled sails all round, including staysail, meant we were thundering at hull speed of nine knots within minutes.

Owner Smart has set this boat up well: an all-encompassing bimini tent (that Tasmanian weather); rib tender on stern davits and trickle charging solar panels means Smart and his partner just need to step on board and cruise Tasmanian waters within the half hour.

He was also right with the shoal draught not affecting boat trim. On a tight reach at hull speed the boat just tilted a little bit; there was no indication of such a beamy boat digging itself into the water as we sped off.

Under its new ownership Hunter Yachts are retaining its distinct cosy nook interior and coupling it with sea-kindly hull design.

While Sydney Harbour does not give a good indication of ocean seaworthiness, I was happy to take owner Smart's word for it and would certainly love to do a long ocean passage on such a craft that relishes in its size without presenting a daunting challenge.

The base boat price of \$500,000 base gave Smart plenty of scope to add the options he desired, taking his final price to below \$650,000.

"Boat for boat this is the best built and fitted that I have seen. This one'll see me through," says Smart.

