



Us and them – the social and sailing cockpits illustrated

boat without compromising on performance. To this end the main focus for the Farr 525 is the split-cockpit configuration. The forwardmost cockpit is positioned where a centre cockpit would normally be, but in this case has no lines whatsoever. It is a purely social cockpit. Deep, comfortable, secure and within easy access of the companionway steps this area is perfect for family cruising.

There are no control lines on the coachroof and even the genoa sheets run under the deck as they pass this midships area to prevent them from flogging close to passengers' heads during manoeuvres.

The after cockpit is the sailing cockpit and is equally cleverly arranged with twin wheels and three winches positioned within easy reach of helmsman and crew. The twin wheels allow easy access forward to the mainsheet winch mounted on the centreline as well as the genoa sheet winches, while also providing a comfortable and secure helming position from whichever side you prefer.

According to Peter Morton of BSI, part of the original concept was to produce a boat that could compete in events on the fun regatta circuit, such as Antigua and Cowes, with just three or four experienced sailors running the boat. A further ten non-sailing friends could then ride on the weather rail and be a part of the racing without having to play a key role. The more I sailed the boat, the more I felt confident that she satisfies this brief.

Sail trimming all happens back in the sailing cockpit while hoisting a cruising chute or other similar operations take place at the mast.

From the helmsman's point of view she's a beautiful boat to sail – well balanced, responsive and rewarding. Upwind she'll slip along at 6.5 knots in just 8-10 knots true. Crack her off a few degrees and even with the skinny top to her headsail opening out and losing power, she can still hit 7+ knots.

Nips and tucks

The hull is based closely on that of the Farr 50 pilothouse but with a few nips, tucks and stretches. While the rudder has been moved slightly and the deep-draught version is just 300mm deeper at 2.6m, the main

FARR 525

For all its good points, a conventional deck saloon cruiser can be a complicated affair; clusters of winches around an angular cockpit designed to cater for both sailors and passengers in the same small working area. The result is often a cluttered cockpit that's tricky to operate without moving people around each time you want to trim or tack.

The new generation of Farr performance cruisers, built by the Swedish BSI yard, aims to separate the working areas of a modern

'The main focus for the Farr 525 on deck is the split cockpit configuration'



FARR 525

difference between the 525 and her older sister is in her rig, which is built in carbon with twin aft-swept spreaders.

According to the basic spec, she displaces around the same as her more angular sistership and sets a similar amount of sail area, but with a taller mast and a longer boom which create a more efficient high aspect ratio format.

Hull construction is slightly more sophisticated than the 50: a vinylester resin with E-Glass and a Divinicecell foam core. Aramid fibres are used in some of the high load areas. Overall she appears to be built to the same high standards as her stablemates with beautifully finished joiner work and an attention to detail throughout that is typically Swedish.

While her hull is a Farr design, Mark Tucker's UK-based Design Unlimited has been responsible for the deck layout, styling and interior arrangement. They have taken a familiar style and tweaked it to achieve an uncanny feeling of space and volume for a 54ft boat.

On the slant

Maple cabin sole, teak joiner work and the mixture of fabric and leather upholstery give this yacht some unusual styling. However, the angles and proportions Tucker has employed are the most distinctive trait. The saloon is set diagonally across the boat, the galley has a chicane-type walkthrough, which provides additional worktop space and bracing points, and the proportions of the two after cabins, along with the headroom in the walkway through to them, is ingenious.

The Farr 525 has two spacious heads and even the engine room seems twice as large as necessary, although with the watermaker, generator and other items that will doubtless end up here, the space will soon get used up.

However, for all her decent proportions, she does lack a dedicated nav station, which for me would be essential on a boat of this size and capability. Sitting on the end of a sofa at the chart table has more than a touch of camper van about it. Having said that, an option for a fully fitted, dedicated nav station is available.

Also on my shortlist of niggles was the height of the saloon seating which at 380mm above the cabin sole seemed on the low side and the lack of a mirror on the dressing table in the owner's cabin.

A pathetic list of gripes I know. Even



Above: the Farr's saloon, with its diagonal layout, is a refreshing change. A dedicated nav station is available. Left: an impressive owner's cabin forward with spacious head and shower unit. Below: the chicane walkthrough is clever and provides acres of work surface as well as plenty of places to brace yourself



ON TEST



when you add them to the niggles of limited stowage aft on deck and a lack of cockpit lockers and cubby holes, they don't appear to carry any real weight when you set them against the plus points such as the ample stowage below decks, the good handholds, her deep sump and the tremendous amount of light in the saloon.

By the end of our trials the bottom line was abundantly clear to me. Whatever you may think of her looks or her price tag, the 525 exhibits a refreshing new approach that really does combine performance with comfort in a layout that could well become a template for other modern cruisers.

Conclusions

Even if she was a dog, which she certainly isn't, this boat would still be worth a serious look. To my mind her deck layout is one of the best-executed arrangements of its type and makes sailing fast fun. One person can handle this boat with ease underway and enjoy it in the process.

In my experience, most stress in family sailing stems from a poor layout on deck and shabby sailing characteristics. The result is often that the sailors feel out of control while the passengers feel in the way and vulnerable. The 525's layout goes a long way to removing the anxiety in family sailing but without compromising on performance. For that alone she should be praised.

Having said that, she's not unique, but joins an exclusive hand of well-conceived cruisers. Let's hope she influences others.



MARTEN 49

A fine bow, slab-sided topsides, a sleek, low profile coachroof, a wide cockpit and an open transom can make a boat look fashionable, but beneath the aggressive styling there's a world of difference between those that look as if they'll go like the wind and those that actually do. The Marten 49 is among the latter.

In just 8-10 knots of true wind she slips along at 6-7 knots upwind. Crack her off and she leaps to 8.5 knots as quickly as you can trim to the new course. Sailing further off the breeze and with her asymmetric spinnaker flown from the retractable bowsprit, she'll maintain 8.5 knots in 10 knots true.

This may not surprise anyone who has just stepped off a contemporary 50ft racer but this is a boat that's aimed at what her builders hope will be a new strain of the cruiser market. "We deliberately avoided the expression 'cruiser/racer,'" said Jamie Boag of Ancasta Boat Sales, Marten's agents in Europe. "We prefer to call her a sports cruiser."

Designed by Reichel Pugh, the Marten 49 is built by the Auckland, New Zealand-based builders Marten Yachts, a company well known for high-quality performance boats, from superyachts such as Mari-Cha III to Ellen MacArthur's Open 60 Kingfisher.

"Our target was to produce the sailing equivalent of a Porsche," explained Boag. "A boat that was perfectly engineered, reliable and practical and with performance to match, but also one that you could put the family aboard and sail in the real world."

Aside from her modern looks, the 49 has a hidden weapon that lies at the heart of her impressive performance, her lifting keel. You don't have to be a yacht designer to appreciate that a 3.4 tonne bulb suspended 3.7m (12.14ft) below the waterline aboard a boat that displaces only 9.5 tonnes in her



Open transom-styled cockpits are becoming increasingly popular aboard modern cruisers

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