

Bavaria gets the Farr factor



Bavaria has teamed up with Bruce Farr for its latest designs, including the new Cruiser 32. David Harding reports

BAVARIA CRUISER 32: volume production cruising yacht **PRICE:** from £67,500

If there's one name in the world of yacht design that has always stood for performance, it's Bruce Farr.

Having made his mark in the 1970s with light-displacement IOR (International Offshore Rule) designs in his native New Zealand, Farr established what has become one of the most successful yacht design studios in the world. America's Cup yachts, Whitbread 60s, Volvo 70s and famous one-offs like *Leopard* and *Longobarda* all bear the Farr name, as do race-winning production boats such as Bénéteau's First 34.7, 40 and 40.7, the Mumm 36, the Farr 40 and some of the fastest TP42s and TP52s around. All of which leads to one very big question: what on earth is Bruce Farr doing designing a Bavaria?

Apart from the Bénéteau Firsts, Farr has produced few production boats that could be described as cruiser/racers, let alone cruisers. Yet here he is putting his name to a voluminous out-and-out cruiser built by a yard whose boats – with the exception of the short-lived Match series – have always been aimed at those in search of accommodation rather than performance.

How Bavaria and Farr formed this seemingly unlikely alliance one can only guess, but the fact is that the new designs from this giant German builder come from the Farr studio. To date we have the 32 and the 55; more are due to follow.



A rig with a minimal-overlap headsail is a new departure for Bavaria

Another notable collaboration is with BMW Designworks USA, a subsidiary of the car maker, who are responsible for the styling and interior. Bavaria's factory has for some time been using production-line techniques developed by car-makers, and now we have Bavaria Yachtbau working on styling with Bavaria Motor Works.

This all suggests that Bavaria's management felt the need for a significant change of direction – or, perhaps more pertinently, a change in the way their boats are perceived. For years the designs have come from J&J. Best known for mainstream production cruisers, this Slovenian design group has also been responsible for speedsters like the Shipman range, so there's no doubting their ability to design boats that perform: it's

principally a question of what they have been asked for.

What Farr and BMW undoubtedly bring to Bavaria, apart from their respective design and styling abilities, is the pulling power of big names. Bavaria had no desire to change the basic formula – boats that are commodious and inexpensive for their length – because the sheer numbers they've sold bear witness to its success.

Aiming high

Where the new 32 differs most notably from earlier models is in the square, prominent coachroof. Its line is continued aft to form the cockpit coamings, which need to be high because the seating is at almost the same level as the deck. When seats are this high because of a raised sole to create space for



MAIN: Bavaria cruisers have always had high-volume hulls and the new 32 is no exception

BELOW: The mainsheet is taken to a strong-point on the cockpit table and can just be reached from the helm. The space beneath the table is wasted; it could be used for stowage



an aft cabin beneath, the only way to gain shelter is to build the coamings up.

Looking at the plan view, it's clear that the Farr team has given the new Bavaria an appreciably finer entry than seen on earlier models. Studying the accommodation plan for a moment you can see that the topsides are relatively upright to maximise internal volume, but from a quick glance you might think you were looking at a typical modern

sporty cruiser: fine entry, broad stern, beam carried well aft.

Further effects of the Farr factor can be seen in the rig. Bavarias have traditionally had relatively small mainsails and masts stepped well forward, leading to narrow foretriangles and the need for overlapping headsails to gain sufficient sail area. Such a rig configuration has been determined partly by Bavaria's convention of taking the mainsheet from the middle of the boom to the coachroof, whereas the 32 breaks new ground by having it run from the end of the boom to a strong-point on the cockpit table. That frees the designers of several constraints, quite apart from placing the sheet where you can actually reach it without resorting to the expense of the 'German system' whereby it's split and led aft to a winch each side.

The difference in rigs is enormous. Here is a Bavaria that carries most of the area in the mainsail and has a relatively small, minimal-overlap headsail. This is what cruisers and race yachts alike

have been moving towards for some time, and for good reason. As the wind picks up you can de-power the mainsail rather than change the headsail or roll it around the headfoil at the risk of ending up with something that looks like a laundry bag. The drawback on a cruiser boat like this is that, without the overlapping headsail, you end up with insufficient area in light airs, though Bavarias have traditionally had modest rigs anyway and, at 16.9, the 32's sail area/displacement ratio is exactly the same as that of several earlier-generation models. Making these changes to the rig while retaining the same power-to-weight ratio should produce gains all round.

Light and heavy

On our first outing, shortly after the new boat arrived in the UK, the wind failed to blow. We chased catspaws around a flat, sunny Solent, the best of them giving us about five knots of breeze for a minute or two. Then a technical problem – no fault of Bavaria's – put an end to our day.

The next time was very different: the wind started in the low 20s and gradually built to around 26 knots. A current flowing in the same direction kept the water flat until the end, when a few steep Solent waves added an extra dimension.

Tucking in one slab seemed sensible and the reefed main, combined with the full headsail, proved ample as we beat down Southampton Water.

This is when the Farr factor began to make itself felt. Unlike earlier Bavaria Cruisers I have tested, this one showed herself to be a boat that actually engages the helmsman and feels as though she wants to be sailed.

By cruising standards we were probably over-canvased. I was working on the basis that it's better to be slightly over-powered in the gusts than under-powered the rest of the time. I also wanted to see how the 32 behaved if pressed a little: on a test you're not out to make life easy for the boat.

One challenge was the combination of stretchy running rigging and clutches that were

struggling to grip the still-slippery ropes, so we had to re-tension the halyards and reefing line several times. Nonetheless, the boat made her way upwind with six knots on the log and tacked through less than 80°. Partly thanks to the flat water, she could be feathered into the gusts but it was critical to keep her driving and to ease the main the right amount. She was sensitive to mainsheet tension, becoming hard-nosed and losing a lot of pace if the main was strapped in too tight, yet re-tensioned enough after a gust.

Despite this sensitivity, however, she was reasonably tolerant if the fine adjustments weren't made. It was clear that she wouldn't punish lax trimming or helming unduly harshly while rewarding those prepared to work. The result was a sailing experience infinitely more absorbing than that offered by her earlier stablemates. This new Bavaria still feels like a high-volume cruiser and can't be expected to deliver the same performance or sailing pleasure as a boat



The flat, clear coachroof is easy to move around in when dry and upright, but the flush-fitting hatches and ineffective non-slip limit grip in the wet

that places a greater emphasis on sailing ability, but she takes Bavaria Cruisers up a league.

A competitive edge

Our tweaking was encouraged by the presence of a new 36-footer of generally similar persuasion that was several hundred yards directly upwind as we set sail. We reeled it in remarkably quickly, sailing both faster and higher and ending up comfortably ahead after a few tacks. To be fair, our 'competitor' was sailing with a well-rolled genoa and a double-reefed main. We had a brand-new boat with brand-new sails, a headsail of a size that didn't need to be reefed, a smooth bottom, almost empty tanks and no kit on board. The only thing holding us back was the fixed propeller.

At the helm I would prefer a slightly larger wheel for a more comfortable perch on the coamings. The feel is pleasant enough; there was a modest amount of weather helm and the

grip was good, too. If I provoked the boat by bearing away with the sheets pinned in, the blade continued to bite until the gunwale wasn't far from the water. Then it stalled and she rounded up.

As on many boats with split pulpits, the headsail can get trapped outside if you don't sheet in quickly enough after a tack or when you harden up from a reach. Otherwise sheeting in a headsail of that size is easy, especially if you tack gently enough so the crew only needs a couple of turns of the handle in the Lewmar 30 winches.

Sheets are on the thin side: 10mm for the headsail and 8mm for the 6:1 mainsheet, which is convenient for the crew to reach and can be trimmed, albeit rather awkwardly, by the helmsman.

For all the considerable bulk of the new 32, there's no doubt that the finer entry, deeper keel (1.95m/6ft 5in) and more efficient sail plan compared with her older siblings have the desired effect.

She did the business reasonably well downwind, too. We logged a consistent eight knots, semi-surfing occasionally down the modest waves to record a best of just over 10 knots. My biggest frustration was that she didn't respond quickly enough to the helm to allow me to flick the bow around and play the waves with any precision – it was all rather ponderous and deliberate. It would have been interesting to see how she carried a spinnaker in those conditions.

Before heading in, we hardened up again into a breeze that had increased to around 25 knots and now had the tide running against it. Still with one slab in the main and the rig de-powered as far as possible, we maintained a comfortable 6 knots and kept the heel to no more than 20° or so. In conditions that might make some people think twice about heading out, it was all pretty civilised. I wouldn't expect anything like the same from the shallow fin.

Initially the RCD rating was Category A for only four people. It has now been upgraded to Cat A for six.

Clearing the clutter

A clean deck layout and wide, flat coachroof make moving around easy when the boat's upright. Only the main halyard and two reefing lines are led aft, to a Lewmar 16 self-tailer on the port side. Everything else is at the mast, including the kicker, topping lift and outhaul.

When the deck is wet and the boat heeled and bouncing around, things aren't so good.

For a start, the non-slip pattern is the most ineffective I



The galley is modest and with limited stowage. A stainless rail is easy to grab and simplifies cleaning but allows small items to slide off



A small, aft-facing chart table is a function of the large heads compartment. T&G-style mouldings are used to line the hull sides

have ever encountered. Possibly the release agent hadn't worn off, but frozen decks have offered more grip than this did. The problem was compounded by the flush-fitting hatches, which are becoming highly fashionable but give you nothing to brace your feet against.

Teak on the cockpit seats provides a more secure footing when you're stepping in from the deck. A teak sole is extra.

Aft of the wheel, the transom hinges down on a gas strut to form a bathing platform, and an emergency boarding ladder can be pulled out next to it.

Stowage is in a large locker to port, with the engine-starter battery



Small windows limit the light below decks but it's good to see a vent. Light oak joinery is extra; mahogany is standard

beneath its false floor. The space below the fixed table could be put to better use.

Non-slip notwithstanding, the quality of the mouldings looked fair and hardware is from known names including Seldén, Lewmar and Rutgeron. The sails look like Elvström's OEM budget spec.

Power comes from a Volvo D1-20 saildrive. We recorded a cruising speed of just over 6 knots at 2,500rpm and 7 knots at the maximum 3,100rpm. Noise levels were low except for the ventilation fan that made itself heard over the engine. Some will consider 18hp to be enough power; others will want the D1-30 (28hp) upgrade.

What you don't get with the standard spec is much equipment. Clipper Marine, the UK dealer, have decided to include a second coachroof winch, though you have to tick the extras boxes for a rod kicker, boarding gates (especially useful when the freeboard is over 1.2m/4ft), spring cleats, a second domestic battery (£475), a sail cover, a UV strip on the headsail and any instruments. Add this selection, plus delivery and commissioning, and you've put just short of £11,000 on the price. A VHF radio, some basic instrumentation, an anchor and a few warps and fenders will be on most people's list too. This doesn't make the Bavaria an expensive boat for her size but, as ever, it's important to do some spec-for-spec comparisons.

Accommodation

Not so many years ago, Bavarias had windows that were on the small side. Combined with the mahogany joinery, they created an interior that was sometimes criticised for being a little dark.

Larger windows and lighter joinery were then introduced with a fanfare to create a much brighter atmosphere below decks. More's the surprise, then, to find an interior on the new 32 that, if anything, is darker than before. The literature talks about the windows being carefully angled to let in the

(20in) when Bavaria lowers the bunk in future production. A large panel gives good access to the starboard side of the engine and hinged companionway steps let you reach the front. Most of the main service points are easy to reach but there's no room for a drip tray beneath the fuel filter.

Forward of the small, aft-facing chart table is stowage beneath the saloon berth. The bunk-top boards both sides hinge up and the cushions are cut in line with them. Water is in a polyethylene tank under the forecabin berth; fuel is in the aft cabin. Surprisingly given the freeboard, headroom is barely 6ft (1.83m). Overhead is a glassfibre headlining with

removable sections in vinyl-covered ply. Bavaria don't use internal mouldings to form the basis of the interior, still favouring pre-assembled joinery modules attached directly to the hull. The finish is much as on earlier models, with unsealed end-grain in evidence throughout but rather less in the way of visible sealant.

PBO's verdict

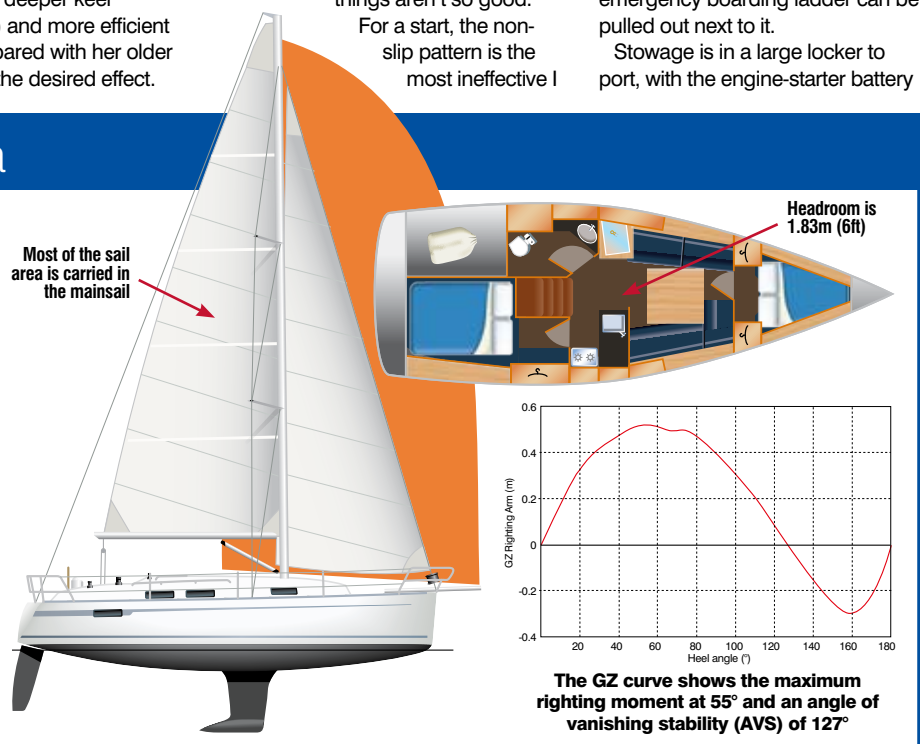
Farr has produced a high-volume boat that sails appreciably better than earlier Bavaria cruisers. In terms of styling she's different, too. On a practical level some aspects of it work better than others.

Bavarias invariably score highly when it comes to the volume:price ratio and the new 32 maintains that tradition while adding a twist of performance for good measure. PBO

This is a high-volume boat that sails better than earlier Bavarias

Bavaria Cruiser 32 data

LOA	9.75m (32ft 0in)
LWL	8.85m (29ft 0in)
Beam	3.42m (11ft 3in)
Draught – standard fin	1.95m (6ft 5in)
Draught – shallow fin	1.5m (4ft 11in)
Displacement	5,200kg (11,464lb)
Ballast	1,300kg (2,866lb)
Sail area (main + 100% foretriangle)	50sq m (538sq ft)
Displacement/length ratio	209.4
Sail area/displacement ratio	16.9
RCD category	A
Engine	Volvo D1-20 diesel saildrive
Headroom	1.83m (6ft 0in)
Designer	Bruce Farr Yacht Design
Builder	Bavaria, Germany
UK Distributor	Clipper Marine. Tel: 02380 605060 www.clippermarine.co.uk



Other boats to look at



Bénéteau Oceanis 31

PRICE: FROM £77,382

Designed by Finot-Conq, with interior styling by Nauta, she adopts a more traditional approach than the Bavaria in some respects: small main, big genoa and shaft-driving engine. ■ www.beneteau.com



Hanse 320

PRICE: FROM £82,815

Hanse's current designs by Judel and Vrolijk tend to place a little more emphasis on performance while still providing plenty of volume. A self-tacking jib comes as standard. ■ www.hanseyachts.co.uk



Dufour Grand Large 325

PRICE: FROM £88,000

Like the others she comes with a choice of deep or shallow fins but also offers tiller or wheel steering and the mainsheet on the coachroof or taken to a track in the cockpit. ■ www.dufour-yachts.com

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