

Sydney 32

Speed comes first in this sporty racer-cruiser with an Aussie racing pedigree

If there is a color associated with speed, it would have to be red. On a Ferrari 575 Maranello, red turns an endless number of heads but it also reduces the dollar count in your kitty by a quarter of a million. And you still don't float. If floating with style and speed is your game, an alternative might be found in the Sydney 32, a spirited 32-footer sporting a gargantuan Ferrari red steering wheel.

Chris Corlett and Allison Lehman of Nelson Yachts, the U.S. distributor of the 32, rounded up some motivated kids, fed a quarter into the wind machine and went off to take the pulse of this latest offering from Sydney Yachts on a snotty summer day on San Francisco Bay. After an informal introduction, I jumped aboard for a *SAILING* boat test and we putted out of the Naval Base in

Alameda, California, where the Pacific Reserve Fleet slumbers and the retired USS *Hornet* aircraft carrier has found a home as a museum.

Obviously the Sydney 32's size puts it right into the competitive market segment that has been the domain of the J/105. "The biggest difference between the two boats is that a grown adult can comfortably stand up in the Sydney's saloon," said Corlett, who used to sail and sell J/105s. Sure, there are other differences too, like the 32's one-foot-shorter waterline, 900 fewer pounds of displacement, 17-square-foot smaller sail area and its conventional chute. But by and large, the two boats sail in the same zip code, which produces good war stories, especially during races with staggered starts.

"At first, the 32 had a surreal handicap, but this was changed to a one-design PHRF rating of 81 with-

out corrections," Corlett said. But if it all goes according to plan and sales reach critical mass, ratings could become a moot point. In Australia, more than a dozen boats are already out and a one-design rule is being drawn up molded after its big sister the Sydney 38.

"Speed is timeless, while ratings are subject to change," co-designer and Sydney Yachts principal Ian Murray outlines his philosophy. His design firm of Murray, Burns & Dowell served up a moderate displacement boat that aims for racing and cruising clients with a manageable sail plan, simple double-spreader aluminum rig, functional deck layout, ample room down below and—dare we say—a surprising level of comfort. These attributes perpetuate the spirit of the late company founder Ian Bashford, whose love for performance lives on in Sydney Yachts. Earlier designs such as *Raptor*, a Sydney 41, and *Bull*, a Sydney 40T, jumped straight out of the box to the top of the leader board in the 50th edition of the Sydney-Hobart and the 2001 Transpac, respectively.

The details

Like all other Sydneys, the 32's hull and deck are made from a cored laminate of vinylester and polyester resin that is vacuum-bagged and cured in a climate-controlled environment for strength and lightness. Sydney claims the 32 conforms to or exceeds ABS standards. A one-piece laminated structural grid incorporates high-load areas such as keel floors, maststep, engine mount and rudder bearing. The carbon fiber chainplates extend all the way to the keel for better distribution of rig loads. Bulkheads and subframes are laminated into place. Nonskid surface on deck, coachroof and cockpit floor, molded-in toerails and foot chocks in the cockpit provide adequate hold for the crew and helmsperson.

On deck

No matter how much the in-laws may enjoy taking the Sydney



Sydney 32

LOA 31'9"; LWL 28'4"; Beam 10'6";
Draft 6'8"; Displacement 6,834 lbs.;
Sail Area 560 sq. ft.

Base boat price \$210,000
Nelson Yachts
1500 Ferry Point
Alameda, CA 94501
(510) 337-2870
www.yachtworld.com/nelsonyachts
www.sydneyyachts.com



The Sydney 32 undergoes a test sail on San Francisco Bay, sailing upwind at 7 knots in the puffy conditions and slack tide.

32 for a Sunday afternoon sail, the boat is at its best with a bunch of grunts in the large cockpit trimming, grinding and squeezing their fannies on the rail. When in racing mode, the cushions and cockpit seats can be removed in a jiffy by opening a few wingnuts. On the test boat the seats were attached with screws so a multi-tool would have been required. A nice touch is the pop-up bow cleat that disappears when under way, so lines and sheets won't get snagged while sailing.

The six two-speed self-tailing Lewmar 30 and 40 winches on the cabintop and along the cockpit coamings are well sized and properly positioned to be within reach of the trimmers and the pit person. The halyards and control lines run through fixed blocks at the mast base and are led back on the cabin-top through organizers to eight



The 32 zips across the bay showing off its Aussie racing heritage.

jammers. Adjustable jib leads and twingers are in the expected places with enough purchase to be trimmed under load. The symmetrical chute emerges from and disappears into the cavernous forward cabin through a semicircular hatch on the foredeck.

The 32's rigid Rodkidker vang makes a topping lift expendable as long as the mainsheet is trimmed to prevent the boom from thrashing around at the helmsman's face-level. The split mainsheet is led up from the center-cockpit traveler, forward along the boom, down to the side deck and aft to the winches, Admiral's Cup style. In the 20- to 25-knot breeze the system produced sufficient power for quick and efficient sheet work, so the traveler could be left alone.

The steering wheel—monstrous, red and sexy—is the demarcation line between the back of the boat and the rest of the world. The deep recess that hides the bottom third of the molded wheel sucks up everything in its vicinity, like a black hole. An itinerant sandwich will get mangled in there, but a wayward winch handle could wreak havoc if it got caught in the spokes. On the test boat pockets for the handles were far and

few between. Like on the 36, the inward flange of the hull-and-deck joint of the 32 is bonded with epoxy and screwed with countersunk stainless Phillips screws. And like on her bigger sister, I suggest patching up the holes with gelcoat to make the heads invisible.

The instrumentation on the test boat was a H1000 system by B&G with three displays on a mast brace, which is not standard, and two screens that required some browsing through various screens mounted at the rear cabin bulkhead.

The runnerless, two-spreader 9/10 fractional aluminum rig by Whalespar left a user-friendly impression. With help of the hydraulic backstay trim it was easily de-powered for the blustery conditions, where sometimes holes were followed with wildly oscillating sledgehammer puffs. The suit of Australian Hood Pentex sails had seen its share of use but still looked decent. The nonoverlapping headsail, a class racing jib, ran in a double-groove foil and made tacking a snap. For somewhat less spirited sailing, some customers may want to look into an optional roller-furling setup, which no doubt would



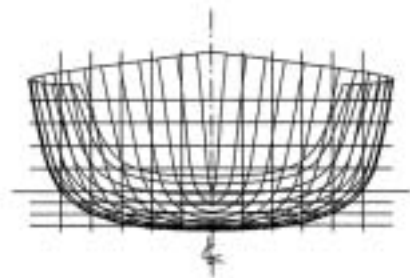
Under spinnaker the Sydney 32 hits 10 knots in the puffs, above. The cockpit seats and cushions are easily removable, below, opening up the cockpit for racing.



reduce efficiency but would be practical for shorthanded sailing. The class encourages owners to choose a sailmaker of their liking, thus giving them a chance to continue existing relationships.

Down below

Climbing down the steps of the



The wide open cabin has a light and airy feel thanks to the 6-foot, 2-inch headroom and white finish work, top. The galley is to starboard, middle, while the port side L-shaped settee has a lovely teak table with an intricate inlay. The Ferrari red steering wheel draws attention, above left. There is plenty of room for instrumentation in the forward-facing nav station, above right.

companionway's ladder is a descent into a generously sized, bright and airy cabin with 6 feet, 2 inches of headroom throughout, not commonplace on a 32-footer with that kind of pedigree. The two quarterberths are separated by the engine and offer plenty of room for one adult or a cozy fit for two. Add to that the V-berth in the bow, which also doubles as a sail locker during races, and the bunking options are sufficient for an extended weekend trip. The ambiance benefits from the decor, which features teak slats in the quarterberths and the recessed stainless steel handles on the lockers.

A manual Jabsco head and the holding tank are installed to port, forward of the main bulkhead along with a small vanity sink and mirror. Opposite of the head is the forward locker and a spot to hang the wet foulies.

On starboard, opposite the L-shaped settee and the intricately fashioned teak table in the cabin, is where the cook swings the ladle. Sydney Yachts opted for a linear galley configuration, complete with round stainless steel sink and foot-pump, Maxie two-flame gimballed alcohol stove and an icebox that is accessible through a hatch in the counter. Pots'n'pans and miscellaneous galley stuff disappears behind the sliding doors of the overhead storage and under the sink. Operating this galley in a seaway or under heel on starboard tack would be a challenge because there is nothing to brace against.

The nav table right behind the galley faces forward and opens for storage. All the key instruments, a Furuno Navigator-31 GPS, an Icom IC-M45 fixed-mount VHF radio, the Clarion M-5675 AM/FM/CD stereo and the 12V DC switch panel by BEP are within easy reach. Just to pick a nit: The GPS would be a lot easier to read if the screen would swing out 90 degrees to face the navigator and the companionway.

The auxiliary, a 20-horsepower Yanmar two-cylinder diesel, is bared within a few seconds, after removing the companionway steps and unlatching the cover. Its sound insulation is adequate, even as the motor is revved up. About 3,000 rpm are good for 6 knots, which isn't bad, considering that below the water a saildrive and a two-blade folding prop are doing the work. Less is less: a little less efficiency is awarded with a lot less drag, and that counts. The engine also has a 55-amp alternator, supplying juice to the two sealed 100-amp-hour marine batteries.

Under sail

We motored through a strong breeze into the lee of Alcatraz to hoist the sails and rendezvous with the photo boat. With a light helm, which required dinghy-style steering, the 32 ate up the yards at GPS-attested 7-plus knots in slack tide, despite the rather casual call-outs of puffs hurtling down the bay. The boat obeyed corrections unhesitatingly and sailed with just the right amount of weather helm. The four crew on the rail did not suffer claustrophobia forward of the traveler. In the back of the boat however, where the width of the coaming diminished, I wedged myself up to the lifelines, sharing the spot with the main trimmer. I also felt that the angled foot chocks in the cockpit floor were a tad too close for my six-foot frame. Sliding forward a few inches and straddling the rim of the wheel with my knees produced a more comfortable position.

The visibility looking forward was good with the crew hiking outside the lifelines. The jib telltales were never obscured, but a window in the main would have been nice to see traffic to leeward. Like its bigger sister, the 36, it never lost grip when suddenly heeled in a gust, because of its high-lift keel and bulb that extends the draft to 6 feet, 9 inches and its efficient rudder. The water was flat during the sail so spray on deck was a non-issue.

Flat off the breeze along the southern shore of Angel Island under spinnaker and into a building ebb tide, the boat pushed 10 knots over ground, always well balanced on the helm. The spaghetti factory in the cockpit looked more dramatic than it actually was, considering that the seats would have been removed in real racing mode. After an effortless jibe the chute was doused and stuffed into the V-berth forward. Since the jib was already up, it was time for soda, sandwiches and a broad reach home.

At around \$210,000 sail-away price that includes sails, electronics, commissioning, bottom paint, faired appendages and tuned rig, the Sydney 32 is a steal compared to a Ferrari's sticker price. Swift and entertaining, she suits a variety of sailing tastes and therefore should find a following in the United States too. As numbers develop, so will a one-design class. And if you still are waffling about getting a fast car or a fast boat, here is something to ponder: Hard on the wind or blasting down the course, the 32 looks decidedly better than anything on four wheels.