

Pocket rocket

Six boats sold and counting – Jim Donovan's little GP26 is going international

One of the Holy Grails of raceboat design is in the quest for finding high performance, high stability and low cost in the same package, since these are usually offsetting features. Nowhere is this more true than in smaller boats where there is a large potential market but one that has tremendous price sensitivity.

Jim Donovan has recently teamed up with Wraceboats at Mag Marin in Istanbul to produce a series-built 26ft high-performance sportboat that certainly approaches this ideal. Designed to the GP26 box rule as a convenient benchmark, the Wraceboats GP26 has all the elements of speed, structure and stability to fit the box rule, yet achieves this at the quite reasonable base price of €41,000. The GP26 rule itself was devised by the ORC some years ago as a modern equivalent to the 1/4 ton concept to encourage small-scale build projects.

Cost-efficiency is achieved in part due to sensible use of epoxy resin systems from Resoltech, E-glass and carbon from Metyx Composites, and Corecel M-core from Gurit. The GP26 rule recognises and Wraceboats fully utilise the benefits of carbon in highly loaded areas, for example the internal keel structure, making for a stiffer and more durable yacht. Additionally the keel fin, rudder, stock and rig from Pauger are built in carbon. And thanks to the growing composite boatbuilding culture in Turkey, there is local talent available to produce a good result at modest labour cost.

The large cockpit is ergonomically perfect, with a simple deck layout using the latest hardware from Harken plus self-aligning rudder bearings. Optional equipment includes a lifting keel and removable cassette-style rudder to reduce draft for navigation and crane hoisting. The price list even includes instruments from Tacktick and sails from North, so the builder does provide a convenient one-stop shopping experience.

The GP26 provides a generous 40.3m² of upwind sail area, which downwind explodes to include a 82m² asymmetric kite hung off a retractable prod, providing plenty of horsepower for only 1,000kg of displacement. And with 495kg of ballast hung 1.9m below the waterline, there is plenty of stability to supplement that provided by the typical crew of five or six.

Donovan's comments are from having sailed and raced on hull no1 around the Bosphorus before it was shipped off to Norway:



The first production Wraceboats GP26 lights up the Bosphorus

'Sailing aboard the Wraceboats GP26 has demonstrated the design's abilities with the exceptional speed and control that every sailor wants in their yacht. It has a stable and well-balanced hull form, deep fin keel with 50% ballast ratio, efficient carbon rudder, powerful sailplan and easily controlled carbon rig. When you come aboard the boat it feels like a much larger yacht; the spacious cockpit and sensible deck hardware are uncompromised. Advanced construction utilises epoxy vacuum laminates with an all-carbon keel frame and carbon appendages to produce extremely durable and lightweight structures.'

My own GP26 racing experience was on the Bret Van Munster-built, Fred Barrett-designed *Rapid Transit* in Sydney Harbour two years ago, but I can echo Donovan's observations that these boats are phenomenally quick, with a feel and speed of boats much larger in size.

So it was no surprise that among the acres of low-performance canvas, gelcoat and chrome in this year's US Sailboat Show in Annapolis, the Wraceboats GP26 stood out as an attractive and affordable solution to those who want to go fast without resorting to harnesses, wings or foils. To date Wraceboats have sold six boats to Norway, Hong Kong, Turkey and the US, with more to come.

Dobbs Davis

Custom builds

| BOAT | LOA | DESIGNER | BUILDER | LAUNCH | COMMENTS |
|------------------|--------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|--|
| Classe 950 | 9.5m | Kevin Dibley | UK, custom | 2014 | Home built custom 950 with lifting keel |
| Dibley 40 | 12.2m | Kevin Dibley | NZ, custom | 2014 | Custom canting-keel shorthanded offshore race yacht |
| Phoenix | 15.85m | Botin Partners | King Marine | Feb 2014 | A new TP52 for Eduardo Ramos from Brazil, with at least four more puppies set to follow! |
| Langan 55 | 16.67m | Langan Design Partners | Brazil | Dec 2013 | Impressive one-off all-carbon day boat with canting keel and all the performance toys |
| Banque Populaire | 18.78m | Verdier-VPI P | CHK & associates | Sept 2014 | A new Imoca 60 to go with the team's existing 30m solo trimaran |
| Ciao Gianni | 18.28m | German Frers | Persico | Aug 2014 | A series-build run modelled on Jacques Setton's original <i>Ciao Gianni</i> daysailer |
| Irens 65 | 19.72m | Irens and Cabaret | Abu Dhabi Mar | Jan 2014 | Swift new racer-cruiser tri – and as elegant and modern-looking as ever |
| Alia 66 | 20m | Marc Lombard | Alia, Turkey | 2014 | All-carbon racer-cruiser with intriguing rotating-keel system |
| Rán 5 | 21.82m | Judel-Vrolijk | Persico | April 2014 | Two boats will now be built using the Rán tooling at Persico |
| Irens 78 | 23.9m | Irens and Cabaret | Green Marine | March 2014 | Should be very cool. Lightweight new 'modernistic' performance cruising tri |
| Rambler | 27m | TBA | New England Boatworks | May 2014 | A new custom IRC flyer for George David |
| WallyCento 3 | 30.34m | Reichel-Pugh | Green Marine | Feb 2015 | Expect the third WallyCento to be more <i>Magic Carpet</i> than <i>Hamilton</i> ... |
| Infiniti 100 | 30.34m | Hugh Welbourn | Infiniti Yachts | 2015 | Tooling has begun for the biggest DSS adventure so far |
| Macif | 30.5m | VPLP | Multiplast et al. | 2015 | François Gabart gets a new singlehanded machine to keep him busy |
| Sodebo | 31m | VPLP | Multiplast | Dec 2013 | <i>Geronimo</i> becomes <i>Sodebo</i> for Thomas Coville's next Rhum challenge in 2014 |
| WinWin | 32.65m | Javier Jaudenes | Baltic Yachts | Dec 2013 | Sterns are getting wider on these large racer-cruisers as they aim to up the pace |
| Cheveyo | 40.91m | S&S/Stirling Burgess | Spirit Yachts, UK | 2015 | The 11th J Class is being built in wood-epoxy to one of the six Ranger designs of 1937 |
| Dubois 100 | 100m | Dubois Naval Architects | Standing by (eagerly) | 2017... | Unballasted centreboard and a rig the size of the Milky Way... but still delayed |

