



Hull lines are clean and moderate; headsail is set up on a roller furling system.

Classique

Introduction

The Dufour name has reappeared on the Australian marine scene after a considerable break. In the 1980s it was a major player here in the sailboard market. Now a new Australian company called Pacific Yachts has been formed by Lake Macquarie yachtsmen Gil Finlay and Glenn Coulton to import a variety of production boats built by the revitalised French operation.

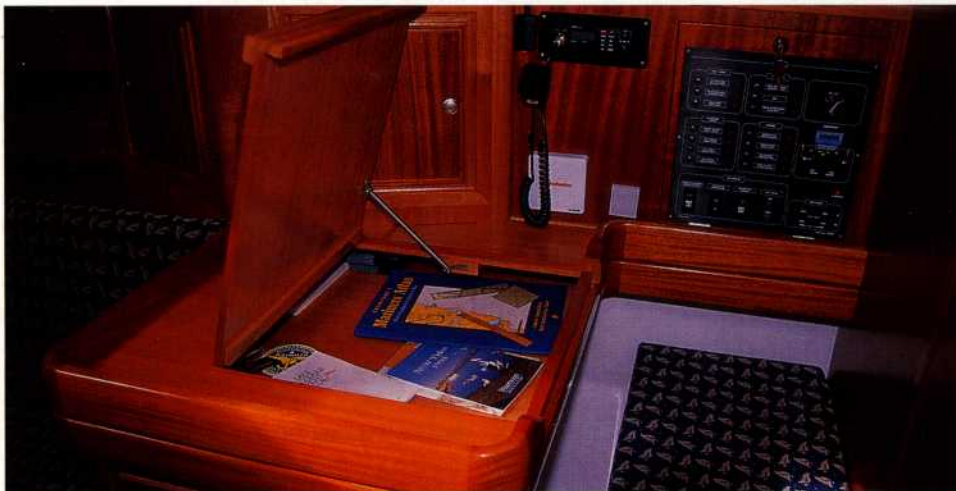
The Dufour range has expanded rapidly in the '90s since becoming part of the Perigny Financial Group, headed by Olivier Poncin. According to *International Boat Industry* magazine, the company has become "one of the brightest stories in French pleasure boat building in recent years" and is Europe's second-largest sailboat builder behind Groupe Beneteau.

Through the introduction of new designs and the purchase of established but failing companies such as Gilbert Marine (builders of the Gib'Sea range), Dufour now produces some 30 yachts across six ranges. These are the Classic masthead rigged sloops (30 - 50ft); the Integral masthead rigged sloops featuring lift keels (30 - 42ft); two Central Cockpit masthead rigged sloops (38 and 42ft); the Trophy range of race oriented, mostly fractional rigged yachts (28 - 42ft), the Prestige semi-custom sloops (48 - 110ft) and the Nautitech catamaran range (39 - 98ft).

The new Australian agents for Dufour are Finlay, a marina developer (Marks Point Marina and the newer Pelican Point Marina, both on Lake Macquarie just south of Newcastle), and Coulton, who runs a sailing school and yacht brokerage and is a top J24 racer. Looking to import a range of yachts for the private and

charter markets around "the Lake" and nationwide, Coulton said he and Finlay checked out a number of other craft before deciding on Dufour at last year's Paris Boat Show. They returned home with the agency agreement for Australia and New Zealand, plus invoices for their first five boats (the Classic 30, 35, 38 and 41 and an Integral 39 shallow-draft lift-keeler), all of which they hoped to ship out in time for the Sydney Boat Show at the end of this month.

First to arrive was the Classic 35, subject of this test. It was sold immediately to a local yachtsman for private and charter use. Coulton said orders for another Classic 35 and two Classic 41s had been received, with two of those also to go into charter, allowing the establishment of a sailing fleet alongside the houseboats and power cruisers operated by the Pelican Boating Centre on Lake Macquarie.



Clockwise from Top Left: Looking forward from the companionway, with the dropleaf table extension down; The twin sinks can be covered with lids to increase galley work space; Glenn Coulton folds out the swimmers' ladder from its permanent storage place under a GRP moulding on the transom; Nav station is traditionally laid out and positioned.

Dufour re-enters the Australian market with its own take on the archetypal French production yacht. Report and photos by Vanessa Dudley

Our test sail was in light winds and flat water. First impressions were of a high quality production boat of fairly conservative design with an impressive fitout, the fruit of thorough attention to detail extending right through to the melamine dinner set bearing the Dufour logo. This is very much in line with the standards in French production boatbuilding set by Beneteau and Jeanneau. Take away the labelling and you could find it difficult to differentiate between them all.

Design and construction

The hull is a one piece, vacuum-bagged GRP sandwich of high density PVC foam and biaxial and triaxial fibreglass cloth, with NPG gelcoat and the first laminate layer impregnated with NPG resin to provide a barrier against

osmosis. Moulded floors and longitudinal stiffeners are laminated to the hull. The deck is GRP balsa core sandwich.

Dufour markets each Classic yacht in standard, grand cruiser and performance versions, with a variety of extras "packs" plus options. The standard version comes fitted out with all the basics needed to go day sailing, but the grand cruiser version upgrades some features like the engine and keel and adds equipment such as autopilot and VHF radio, while the performance version adds spinnaker gear, a fully battened mainsail and bigger winches. The test boat was the grand cruiser version (pack two), and so featured a lead fin keel with small bulb drawing 1.8m, rather than the cast iron keel of the standard version.

There is nothing radical in the lines of the Classic 35, with its moderately raked bow and

transom, full-bodied hull and rounded aft sections. The coach-house is long and carefully merged into the lines of the cockpit coamings and foredeck, so that the boat looks reasonably streamlined and handsome in profile, which is quite an achievement considering the amount of space below decks.

Below decks

The first impression when stepping down the companionway is of light, space and newness, particularly that "brand-new" production boat smell of resins, sawdust and plastic wrap. There is timber everywhere, from the mahogany table, navigation station, doors and panelling to the teak floorboards. Light streams in through the numerous hatches and windows, gleaming on the stainless steel sinks

