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APRIL 8, 2011

First Licks on the Farr 400

Bill O'Malley, the guy charged with selling the Farr 400 one-design in the U.S., takes a trip to Dubai to see what he has to offer.

By Bill O'Malley

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The anticipation has built in the weeks and days leading up to the launching of the new Farr 400 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The teams at Farr Yacht Design and Premier Composite Technologies have been steadily working toward this day over the past eight months. It's an incredible process to witness, as a design concept transitions from idea to reality and all the phases in between.



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Premier Composite Technologies, the builder, did an impressive job with construction, meeting the design weight, matching our weight calculations along the build cycle, and delivering the boat a week ahead of schedule—something unheard of in boatbuilding!

In the final design phases, as the big picture comes into focus, there's an opportunity to optimize performance. Shifting from a cast iron keel fin to a fabricated steel keel fin reduced the displacement to 8,600 pounds without increasing costs. This has a very positive impact on its light-wind and downwind performance, without sacrificing heavy-air performance, making the Farr 400 even more versatile.

In late March, Luke Shingledecker of Farr Yacht Design and I traveled to Dubai to visit Premier, sail the first Farr 400, and conduct a week of sea trials. The schedule for the week was full: including launching, in- and out-of-water IRC and ORC measurement, evening meetings to discuss class administration and rules, and some local racing at the Dubai Offshore Sailing Club.

First impressions: the boat presents a bold, aggressive, and modern appearance. The bow is full and powerful—a shape designed to emulate a longer boat and promote fast, bow-up downwind sailing. The deck configuration is clean and simple; the flush-deck styling is all for racing. The reverse, aft-sloping sheer provides the boat plenty of interior volume, allowing easy movement through the interior. I'm 6-foot-1, and I can stand inside the companionway with my head just touching the underside of the deck. During a light-air race with a short swell, we had “dogs in the house,” with six of 10 crewmembers comfortably sitting below. The boat felt surprisingly big below decks.

The asymmetric halyard layout allows all pit functions to be led easily to the starboard utility winch or aft

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Manufacturer:

Length Min: Ft. Length Max: Ft.

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to the pedestal-driven port and starboard primary winches. This is a central theme of sailing this boat, as it allows for easier spinnaker hoists, jibes, and takedowns. The layout incorporates a portside sliding foredeck hatch to facilitate the pedestal-driven spinnaker takedown system. These features, borrowed from TP52s and other grand-prix classes, will prove to be highly desirable as sailors become familiar with them. At first glance, they may seem complicated, but with a little practice, these systems allow crews to execute quicker boathandling maneuvers.

Sailing the Farr 400, it quickly became obvious—this style of layout is more fun to sail, and it points to the future for race boats in this size range.

For more information, check out www.farrdesign.com and the April issue of *Sailing World*, on newstands now.

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