

Thoroughly modern solution

Dobbs Davis takes a spin on the first Farr 400 all-carbon one-design



Hannes Waimer and his team at Premier Composite Technologies (PCT) in Dubai were on time and on budget for the launch of the first Farr 400, an all-carbon one-design meant to appeal to those interested in sportboat performance in an offshore-capable yacht. PCT have benefited from a recent move to an enormous new facility where they now also build the world's largest composite mosque domes, a business that helps in both carbon buying power and in affording some impressive equipment, like the enormous five-axis milling machine that quickly and accurately handles all their tooling needs. This and a large staff give them the potential to produce up to two Farr 400s per month, to help keep production on pace with the current sales momentum.

Under the auspices of the Dubai Offshore Sailing Club we had an opportunity to join boat no1 for a local 30-miler around one of Dubai's famously 'decorative' manmade islands. In hot, humid conditions winds ranged from 5kt to 11kt, and despite a punishing 1.248 IRC rating, the boat actually availed itself nicely against the local fleet which ranged from an ageing IMS 50-footer, a Farr 11S and a Landmark 43, to a wider variety of slower boats, all quickly left on the hazy horizon after a few minutes into the first reaching leg.

The takedown system used is one of many clever features, sucking dozens of square metres of asymmetric kite quickly down and into the forward hatch with a takedown line led through the boat to the pit winch. Nor was there much whining from the dogs in the house for a light and choppy upwind leg, indicating ample room down there to be comfortable! Also, in gear-shifting conditions having the topmast backstays rigged just below the masthead was nice, giving some ongoing headstay adjustment without affecting the upper main shape too dramatically.

Having the jib halyard on a lock means freeing up the single pit winch for other uses, the simple jib cunningham also working surprisingly well given an absence of sheaves in the floating tack fitting. Sheet lead controls allow for a wide range of adjustment, the jib staying up downwind thanks to the long sprit keeping the kite well clear of backwind.

Ergonomically, overall the boat feels right: finally, there's a proper



Tidy, modern and well detailed, the Farr 400 is a good looker that with a refined deck layout with plenty of TP52 influence should prove attractive to crews. The full bow is interesting and confirms the growing influence of open class and VO70 design in the wider marketplace

raceboat in this size that doesn't have cockpit coamings to trip over, has good radii on the shear and cockpit sides, and a proper A-sail pit arrangement. At just over 38ft, the boat feels as big as a Farr 40.

It is also full of sensible small innovations, as you'd expect. One of the best is the clever rigging of Dyneema lifelines, legal for use in the Offshore Special Regulations (OSR) since January 2010. PCT have used composite pulpits, pushpits and stanchions with stainless ferrules and a tight-weave double-braid Dyneema to meet the strength requirements and minimise chafe. There are adjustable yet strong terminations, with a ferrule to distribute load on the eye splice, a single spreader-like aft pushpit, eliminating the need for a cross-brace, and a very low-profile termination on the upper lifeline at the pushpit to minimise headsail chafe. And while the composite parts have an outer skin or carbon for appearance, the strength is in non-carbon fibres to comply with OSR guidelines.

These and other details all contribute to the look and feel of a sophisticated custom yacht in a moulded production package, important not only for sex appeal but also for one-design integrity. With 10 sold already to clients in the US, Switzerland, Germany, Dubai and New Zealand, and hull no1 racing in the Med this summer, there is certainly some momentum going here. □

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