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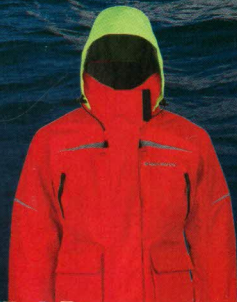
32 BOAT REVIEWS

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CONTEST 42CS

A truly proper yacht sure to please any owner by Tom Dove

Over half a century ago, my music teacher showed me his new boat, a Contest, built in the Netherlands. It was easily the most perfectly crafted vessel I had ever seen, a "proper" yacht in the truest sense of the word. Today, the yard is still in the same location, it's run by the third generation of the same family, and the smallest boat in its line, the Contest 42 CS, is still a proper yacht.

CONSTRUCTION

German naval architect George Nissen designs all the Contest boats. The factory, a large facility about an hour and a half north of Amsterdam in Medemblick, uses vacuum bagging and resin infusion in the hull, deck, bulkheads and reinforcing grid.

All the elements are here, including solid laminate behind fittings and an anti-blisters gelcoat on the hull. The keel is a fin with a lead bulb; a shoal-draft option reduces the depth to about six feet. Teak decks and quality hardware are standard. Surfaces without gelcoat are neatly painted. I have faith that a boat of this quality will be

capable of outliving several generations of contented owners. The hull includes a fine entry with the beam carried well aft to a broad stern. It is modern without being radical, and I think, quite pretty.

ON DECK

Contest builds only aft-cockpit designs under 50 feet, because they feel the cabins get too small with a center cockpit.

Like fine Dutch chocolate, the Contest 42CS deck layout is available in a number of different flavors. Our test boat was the "performance" version, with a carbon mast, main traveller in the cockpit and a cute little retractable sprit at the bow for offwind sails. At the other end of the performance spectrum, the singlehanded version swaps the traveller for a central pod with a winch. It also sports in-mast furling and other rig changes for easier handling. All models carry a narrow 105 percent jib with inboard sheeting.

Like any proper cruiser, the boat has a subdivided foredeck locker to organize the anchor rodes. Typical of the detailing everywhere aboard, the under-deck jib

furler includes a gasket for a perfect fit. Teak decks are standard.

The racy deck equipment and spectra backstay aboard the test boat were a bit unusual on a deck-saloon design, but it all came together visually to make a nice, clean look. The crew will certainly appreciate the built-in halyard and sheet stowage. The boat's German mainsheet system ran from the gooseneck to athwartships, after which it led aft to the winches.

Dual wheels let the helmsman work from either side, while the transom, flanked by a pair of lockers, drops open for easy boarding. The companionway hatch slides down into its own integral holding compartment, neatly solving the problem of what to do with the boards when the boat is open.

ACCOMMODATIONS

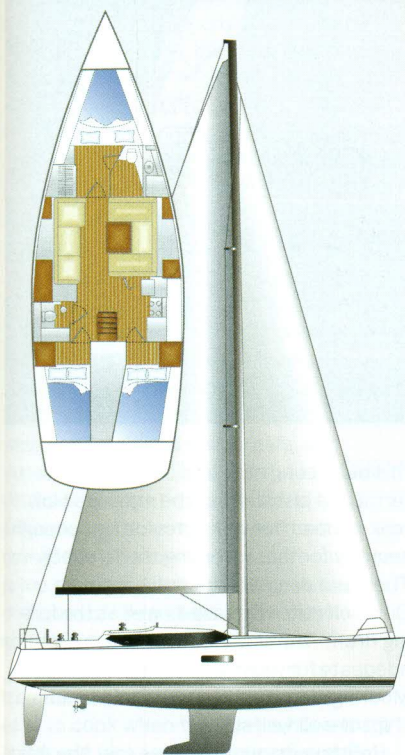
I sailed the three-cabin version of the Contest 42CS, which has a V-berth forward and double berths aft to port and starboard. The two-cabin layout has one aft double and an extra large seat locker.

Strong, sizable rails surround the companionway in the interest of security. The sturdy overhead grab rail is offset to go around galley sink, but unfortunately is too high for short sailors to reach.

There is no chart table, as that function is built into the saloon table, which has connections for most modern electronic devices. Wi-Fi on board is standard equipment, so you can run a nav app on your iPad and stream the output to the TV.

I have faith that a boat of this quality boat will be capable of outliving several generations of owners

Specifications



LOA 42ft 2in // **LWL** 38ft 7in // **BEAM** 13ft 7in
DRAFT 7ft 3in (std); 5ft 11in (shoal)
DISPLACEMENT 24,251lb
BALLAST 9,200lb
SAIL AREA 774ft² (100% FT)
FUEL/WATER/WASTE (GAL) 66/106/36
ENGINE 54hp Yanmar with saildrive
DESIGNER Georg Nissen
BUILDER Contest Yachts, Medemblick, The Netherlands, contestyachts.com
US DISTRIBUTOR Berthon USA, Newport RI, 401-846-8404, berthonusa.com
PRICE Upon Request
BALLAST RATIO 38%
SAIL AREA-DISPLACEMENT RATIO 15
DISPLACEMENT-LENGTH RATIO 188

When not in use, the TV retracts into a closed compartment, opening up the living space visually.

The joinery is whitewashed oak, which is a bit untraditional, but quite lovely. The cabin sole is an attractive Swedish-made laminate. Because the mast is stepped on the keel, it comes straight down through the forward end of the saloon, where Contest turns it into an esthetically pleasant feature by exposing the unpainted carbon fiber.

The forward cabin is nicely executed, and the builder offers several different possible layouts. The shower on our test

boat was to starboard and the toilet to port, a logical separation. The main head is conveniently to port at the base of the companionway beside the aft cabin door. It has its own shower and a one-way glass panel that permits a view of the outside world while preserving privacy.

The aft cabin to port comes with what could be classified as either a narrow double or a wide single bunk, depending on your size. The berth to starboard is a bit bigger. Several other options are also available. The thick foam mattresses are very comfy—no small matter on a cruising boat.

UNDER SAIL

We had a light-air day for our test sail on the Chesapeake with the temperature pushing toward 70 degrees—perfect weather for a leisurely daysail. Line tailing aboard the Contest 42 CS is exceptionally nice, and I approve of the detailing, like the chafe guards beside the cleats. The main-sheet system works very well, and the sheet leads are correct. In the light wind, line loads were minimal, but the winches should keep them manageable when breeze picks up.

Tacking was quite easy through less than 90 degrees, and the Contest 42CS does not lose much speed during maneuvers. Five knots of wind yielded 4 knots of boat

speed closehauled. Setting the gennaker, our speed held at just under 5 knots on a beam reach.

The North sails were gorgeous and shapely, the wheels easy and responsive. Balance was perfect, and sight lines from the helms excellent. I found comfortable seating to windward on the cockpit coaming and also to leeward on the cockpit seat.

As a family cruiser, I do have a couple of quibbles. The toerail, for example, begins at the forward end of the saloon and goes forward, which is a bit iffy for cruising security amidships, albeit more comfortable for the rail meat when racing. The cockpit also needs a central foot brace for sailors my height or shorter.

UNDER POWER

Set at 2,200 rpm, the 54hp Yanmar with saildrive returned 6.5 knots of boat speed, while the maximum 3,000 rpm pushed it up to 7.5 knots. The prop is a three-blade feathering model and a bit of tweaking will likely permit the boat to reach its theoretical hull speed of 8.5 knots, as the engine has enough power. The sound level was a low 68 dB at cruise.

All the usual turning and backing maneuvers were normal, with a one-boatlength turning circle. This boat wants plenty of throttle to reverse, but is nicely behaved once you do that. Our test boat had a bow thruster, which retracted to eliminate drag. With a little practice, a skipper should be able to “crab walk” into tight spots. ♦



THE DETAILS: The starboard quarterberth is large and quite comfortable (left); the saloon is well executed and replete with clever features (below)

