



A STAR TURN

With design and outfitting that reflects the ocean-going experience of both owner and skipper, *Polina Star IV* is ready to take on the world, learns *Mike Owen*

Photography Carlo Baroncini





“WITH THE HELP OF OUR HUGE SAIL LOCKER, I ANTICIPATE WE WILL SAIL 70 TO 80 PER CENT OF THE TIME, THE REVERSE RATIO OF MOST”

As the numbers attached to a yacht’s name rise, the experience aboard tends to self-declare. That’s certainly so with *Polina Star IV* and her owner, a keen, active yachtsman and veteran of many Atlantic crossings, who with his captain prescribed a very personal customisation of the all-new, 26-metre Contest 85CS.

“While some semi-custom builders are reducing the opportunity to truly personalise, we are showing in this new launch that we really can go far,” says Arjen Conijn, third-generation CEO of this family-owned shipyard.

Contest Yachts is known for semi-custom blue-water cruisers, with a 60-year history of innovation in design and build technology, and the Dutch yard has a growing reputation for yachts optimised for both light and heavy winds. That is, after all, what oceans serve their sailors.

“Any yacht can sail fast in 15 to 25 knots but, honestly, that’s always a little uncomfortable with the wave movement and heeling. A few hours are enough. If you want to eat, sleep or shower it’s not relaxing,” says Captain Alessio Cannoni, who has been a professional sailor and racer for 20 years. The answer, he believes, is a lightweight yacht design and a large number of sails to choose from, offering the option of sailing well in both light winds and heavy: “in five knots and 50 knots”. In storms they can reduce the sailplan, while in light winds, big sails will allow them



For such a sleek design, Polina Star IV combines unusual levels of functionality with elegance. There is a whole range of bigger usual and additional sailing and operational hardware – all to ensure top-line safety and to keep things running when the going gets tough. Opposite page: the teak and oak interior was styled by Wetzels Brown Partners





With the owner's emphasis on self-reliance, all-weather performance and minimal engine and generator hours, the standard flush decks feature full dorade ventilation and traveller in place of a single-point main for optimised sail trim. The skipper's simple seating swings up to stow away on the fixed bimini legs



Done in one

Lloyd's Register surveyor Ranko Petkovic is impressed with the yard's resin vacuum infusion process. Whereas laminate layers are wetted by brush in hand "lay up", this process uses vacuum pressure to suck in just the required resin, resulting in a lighter boat. "Infusion [also] gives better quality because you don't have breaks in the process. When you hand-laminate you have to stop as you have many layers and you cannot do it all in one day. This can never be as good as infusing in one go. This is all [bonded] at a molecular level." Contest's single-shot infusion takes this several steps further. While other yards infuse in stages with similar pauses in process, Contest bonds the entire structure in one infusion. As Petkovic explains, "Contest is the first yard infusing both the inner and outer skin with the [sandwich] core in one go. I still haven't seen anyone else doing this. The rest I've worked with infuse the outer skin first, then bond the core to that, and after that do the inside skin."



ALL SYSTEMS NEEDED TO BE FAIL-SAFE. AND NOTHING CAME ABOARD THAT CAPTAIN CANNONI COULD NOT REPAIR OR REPLACE AT SEA. "YOU CAN'T HAVE A TECHNICIAN VISIT MID-OCEAN"

to sail "fast and flat" – comfortable enough for a shower. "Now that is both relaxing and fun," says Cannoni. "With the help of our huge sail locker, I anticipate we will sail 70 to 80 per cent of the time, the reverse ratio of most."

The point was proven in a mid-winter sail from the Netherlands to Sardinia, with very low engine hours in a near non-stop passage that included the foulest of Biscay storms followed by frequent Mediterranean calms in which *Polina Star IV* maintained good speed, boosted by her big code sails. "We had all weathers," says Cannoni, with a smile. "It proved the boat well."

I discover her light-wind prowess for myself, sailing *Polina Star IV* in Cannoni's home waters off Tuscany. In the variable winds we encounter, we slip along faster than true wind speed right up to around eight knots. Later, in 16 to 18 knots' breeze,

we hit 12 knots while reaching and up to 10 beating, remarkably to 24 degrees apparent. At all times the feel through the twin carbon wheels was weighted just right. That's down not just to direct, mechanical steering but also to the single rudder that remains central to the blue-water thinking of both Contest and naval architect Judel/Vrolijk.

The expertise of this naval architecture studio is also evident in the hull lines and structural form, while Contest Yachts has kept weight to a minimum and strength to a maximum through its use of a unique vacuum infusion process (*see opposite page*).

That and the finely finished fit-out offered by the yard persuaded the owner to approach Contest, which had built his initial two *Polina Stars*, a 48 and 62.

That all-weather potential of a Contest also helped. "Since





The single-section surround to the aft master suite bed (left) illustrates the technically complex joinery work. Safety features include life jacket lockers by all cabin exits, a snug galley with centreline refrigeration, high-sided beds with handholds and canting bases, practical sliding doors for corridor cupboards and saloon nav-comm station, which is duplicated in the crew quarters

beginning with Contest [on the 67CS] we've evolved the hull with finer lines in the bow and more beam aft," says Torsten Conradi, partner at Judel/Vrolijk. The aim was to find the best balance in volume distribution to improve overall, but especially upwind, performance. "We've also minimised wetted surface for light wind performance, straightening the lines, looking for a smooth water flow, reduced hull rocker, redefined the main section – all clear logical steps."

The owner and skipper made safety and functionality absolute priorities. All systems needed to be fail-safe, which meant a minimum of duplication for redundancy and swap-out. And nothing came aboard that Cannoni could not repair or replace at sea. "You can't have a technician visit mid-ocean," he says.

Inevitably on yachts of this type, systems are many, complex and mostly automated. Cannoni, though, knows every relay, switch, valve and sensor throughout, such that he can activate virtually all manually. Contest always ensures full maintenance access and easy swap-overs in its yachts, but this was a step on.

The same logic applies above deck. The Hall/North/Lewmar/Harken/Reckmann cutter rig with A-frame was configured for manual and even solo operation in case of hydraulic or electrical failure. For the Hall carbon spars and North Sails 3Di sails this means a fully battened, slab-reefed main; for line and sail handling, an extra proliferation of oversized hardware. The arrangement provides a solution to all Cannoni's envisaged deck issues. Six dorade vents on the foredeck, meanwhile, offer trouble-free natural ventilation throughout – with no need for power-consuming, forced-air systems more prone to breakdown. Plus, all the metalwork around the periscope-like vents provides a convenient handhold while moving along the deck.

But yacht usage is all about choice, of course: the standard spec Contest 85CS presents an open, flush deck plan for owners thinking more of casual Med cruising than spending months adventuring deep ocean. That version also offers more cabins for up to four crew and eight guests.

Below on *Polina Star IV* is a beautifully refined, hand-finished and detailed teak and oak interior, styled by Wetzels Brown Partners and arranged for six guests and a crew of two. Here, too, there are many practical features rooted in Cannoni's prerogatives, like the open-fronted lifejacket locker by the companionway steps, or the quick-action escape ladder and hatch in all cabins. Consider also the plentiful, ergonomic handholds and the hinged canting boards beneath all berths that level sleepers for better rest on tacks that can last days, even weeks. But despite all this, there is absolutely no loss of comfort, and the silence below – even while sailing upwind in 25 knots and more – is exceptional.

In addition, showers and heads all face along the centreline, scaled for easy use even in big seas. In the galley, the same maxim applies: appliances and drawers all open on that same centreline, denying gravity the chance to spill contents on opposite tacks. The galley is also compactly proportioned to wedge oneself in safely, simplifying meal prep under way.

Forward, despite bunks for only two, crew space is generous. The idea is to minimise intrusion on guests, so there is a full workshop and laundry with sliding door and drawer stowage for tools and linen. There's also a second navigation station-cum-office and watertight access to that huge sail locker, which is arranged so that sails hoist from within for simplicity. Forward are four watertight compartments with a double crash box (sacrificial bow) for extra protection.

In *Polina Star IV* it appears nothing is left to chance – even the lithium-battery bank and cabling for navigation and communication systems are all installed at a minimum of 1.5 metres above the waterline to prolong operation should water ingress ever threaten. A raised, independently powered 1,000-litre-per-minute emergency pump offers extra insurance.

All that's left now is to set sail. The new *Polina Star IV* is more than ready to take on the world for an owner keenly determined to complete the ultimate sailing adventure. ▣



Polina Star IV

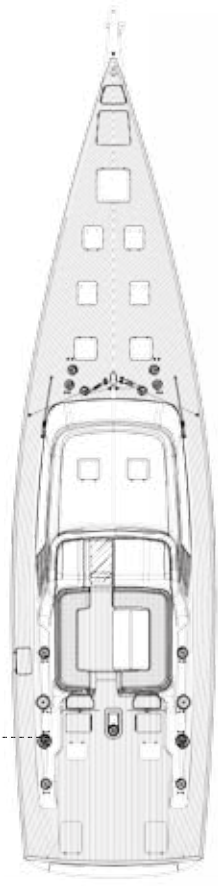
Contest Yachts

Main deck

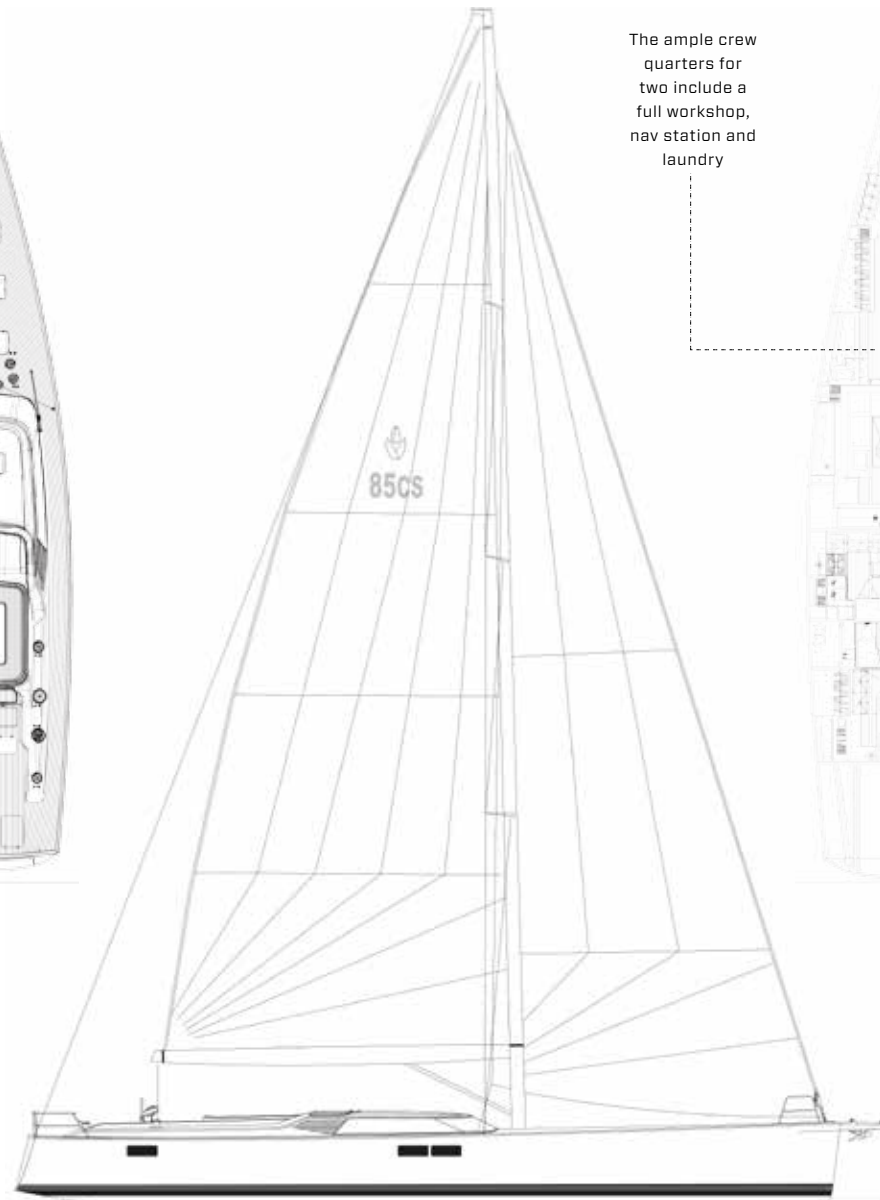
Profile

Lower deck

A proliferation of robust sailing hardware provides the redundancy the skipper required



The ample crew quarters for two include a full workshop, nav station and laundry



The sail locker is enormous, carrying the kit needed for winds from five to 50 knots



The master enjoys the prime position aft while guests are situated fore and aft of the saloon

10m
5m
0m

LOA (incl. bowsprit)
28.65m
LWL 23.17m
Beam 6.4m
Draught 3.79m

Displacement
53.9 tonnes
Engine
260hp Volvo Penta
Sails North Sails 3Di
Rig Hall Spars

Generators
2 x 17.5kW Cummins Onan
Fuel capacity
2,500 litres
Freshwater capacity
1,500 litres

Tender
3.4m Highfield
Owners/guests 6
Crew 2
Construction GRP

Naval architecture
Judel/Vrolijk & Co
Exterior styling
Judel/Vrolijk & Co
Interior design
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Builder/year
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