



AUSTRALASIA'S LEADING MARINE LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

CLUB MARINE

Vol. 34 No. 3

RRP \$12.95



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New Sail

DYNAMIC DEHLER

The German-built Dehler 42c deftly dances the twin roles of a modern club racer with that of a cruiser with sporty spice.

By Crosbie
Lorimer



The cruising is as
comfortable
as the racing is
rewarding

'Lost in translation' is a phrase that often applies to foreign language versions of yacht brochures, which can vary from amusing to bemusing and, occasionally, right on the money.

Describing a yacht as being 'as changeable as a chameleon' could suggest a creature prone to sudden and unpredictable turns in behaviour ... not something you generally want in a yacht! But when you've had the opportunity to sail the German produced Dehler 42 (to which this analogy refers in its English brochure) you sense that the underlying message is spot on.

Adaptability is undoubtedly a hallmark of the Dehler 42, particularly given that Dehler Yachts has always favoured the performance end of the spectrum in its designs – more racer/cruiser than cruiser/racer; if you will. But that pathway comes with some particular challenges, not least in ensuring that the cruising is as comfortable as the racing is rewarding.

So, for the keen club racer to which the Dehler 42 will undoubtedly appeal, a fast hull shape is a prerequisite. And, with that overriding

constraint in play, accommodation must be modelled around the hull form and not the other way around.

A tricky balance and one that we got to test on a warm and breezy late summer afternoon on Sydney's Pittwater, courtesy of Dehler's Australian agent Windcraft Yachts.

First impressions as I glimpsed the Dehler 42 at the end of a long pontoon drew a smile, as I recalled the Dehlers I had raced against way back when. In the 55 years in which Dehler has delivered more than 25,000 yachts across 63 models, the distinctive DNA of this marque has remained strong. Dehlers have always looked stylish and fast – gratifyingly, the Dehler 42 is no exception.

RACE RIGGING

Meeting Ric Hawkins of Windcraft as we boarded the boat, we opted for a whistle-stop tour around the yacht as we were keen to make the most of the rapidly building breeze before it ventured into gale-force territory, forecast for later that afternoon.

Our review model, a Dehler 42c, was configured in competition mode with carbon spars, a competition specification T-keel and spade rudder. Although the sail wardrobe comprised the basic package Elvstrom FCLs, Ric's team had also rigged a halyard for a large (pink) gennaker for our test sail, a chance to let the yacht stretch her legs downwind.

The deck revealed a neat and functional layout that looks well-suited for racing and cruising. The comfortable cockpit also hints at the boat's adaptability: for racing mode the table can be removed, instrumentation is fixed above the companionway where it can be seen by helm and crew alike (for cruise mode, instrument pods can be attached to the rear of the cockpit seats) and even the swimplatform can be left ashore. A chameleon indeed!

And like a chameleon, not everything on the surface is quite what it seems.

The hull's smart grey finish appears to be a gelcoat, but is in fact a vinyl wrap. While perhaps not quite as hardwearing as a traditional finish, it looks as good as gelcoat and can apparently be replaced three to four times for the same cost as a respray, in a fraction of the time.

The second deceiver is the smart teak deck – it happens to be a synthetic teak finish that is

hard to distinguish from the real thing, also having similar grip qualities and available with various caulking colours. The teak finish is even offered in 'scrubbed' or 'weathered' look if preferred. If you've ever had to holystone a teak deck, these smart, low-maintenance options are highly recommended!

UNDER SAIL

As we motored our way down Pittwater and past Scotland Island it became apparent that we were in for a lively sail. With the sails set at full hoist, I was handed the wheel as we headed off on a broad reach, immediately sensing the weather helm kick in as the heavier gusts shouldered us from behind.

"Bear away a bit," suggested Ric as the Dehler yielded to one of the stronger gusts. Sure enough, just a five degree nudge to port was enough for the boat to find its groove, the weather helm disappearing, the boat levelling out and soon effortlessly clocking up 12 knots of boat speed. Pleasingly, no chine is required in the Dehler 42's elegantly faired hull to keep it on track either – something of a rarity these days.

With gusts exceeding 25 knots, I was interested to see how the Dehler 42c would handle itself upwind with a full mainsail and overlapping genoa, when in normal cruising mode we would be well reefed by now. The answer was surprising, the boat tracking steadily enough at 8.5 knots at a 30-degree apparent wind angle, even with the mainsail being feathered in each new gust; and all this with the baseline FCL battened furling sails.

The view of the yacht from our chase boat revealed how well the dark hull colour suits it, especially when the narrow topside ports have a

Rounded joinery and warm tones add to the lux factor below.



white pinline. In combination with the 'eye' styled cabin window and low coachroof, the boat has a businesslike look about it.

There isn't a production yacht around that looks photogenic sailing upwind in 30-knot gusts, but our photos show how comfortable the Dehler 42c looks in these conditions and it was only in the heaviest gusts that there was any tendency to round up, getting straight back on track as soon as the mainsail was fully eased.

With the wind edging close to 35 knots it was time to call it quits and head home; the pink gennaker would have to wait for another day.

COMFORTABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Back at the berth, we checked out the yacht's accommodation. According to Windcraft, the majority of recent-model Dehlers in Australia have been purchased by families who mix club racing with coastal cruising, so comfort remains an important factor.

While that balance is not an easy one to strike, the review boat's saloon and cabins are

comfortable and warm-toned, with Dehler's distinctive rounded cabinets running full length above the lounges, maintaining clean lines while offering ample storage and space for all instrumentation.

The chart table can be moved laterally to free up an extra bunk and the fold-down dining table seats five or six. The galley is compact and neat, with a two-burner stove, oven and 130lt fridge, although working area is limited if both sinks are in use.

The saloon's moving parts – doors, engine cover, tables and chart desk – have been designed to millimetre-perfect non-conflicting movement arcs, but one senses that some day-to-day familiarity with the boat's interior will help avoid being 'trapped' by some of these moves. A minor compromise, really, if the upshot is a boat that's compact, comfortable and unpretentiously stylish, and performs well on the club racing scene.

Chameleon-like qualities perhaps, but with an important difference: the eye-catching Dehler 42c seems unlikely to blend into any background. 

The eye-catching Dehler 42c seems unlikely to blend into any background

DEHLER 42c (Competition Spec)	
LOA:	42ft (12.84m)
Beam:	12ft (3.91m)
Draught:	2.38m. Competition T-keel: 2.13m
Displacement:	8700kg
Berths:	4 or 6
Fuel capacity:	160lt
Water capacity:	295lt
Engine:	39hp Yanmar
Price in standard configuration from:	\$475,000
Price as tested:	\$660,000
More information: Windcraft Yachts, tel (02) 9979 1709. Web: teamwindcraft.com	