

Dufour 36P



Photos by Jean-Marie LIOT

The new racer-cruiser from France is a winner in both categories

The summer afternoon we test-sailed the new Dufour 36 Performance was warm and clear and the promise of a sea breeze was turning steadily into a reality on the waters of Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay.

With six of us aboard, including Olympic sailor and author Carol Cronin, we hoisted the big mainsail and rolled out the 114 percent working jib. The 36P, which displaces only 14,000 pounds, feels very nimble underfoot, and even though the breeze was still an hour away, the boat put her shoulder down as we sheeted in and accelerated very smartly.

With Carol at the helm, we threw the 36P through a series of tacks. We were pleased to see the new design tack through 33 degrees apparent wind while making 5.5 knots in 7 knots of true breeze. It's always fun to do boat tests with a sailor like Carol aboard since she raises every-

one's game just by being there.

The twin wheels, which are mounted on diagonal pedestals, are fairly far outboard, so you have an excellent view ahead and of the headsail from both the leeward and windward sides. The fractional, slightly overlapping jib trims inside the sidestays, which allows for tight sheeting angles and very close-hauled sailing.

The cockpit has the main traveler running across the sole just forward of the wheels; the sheet is double-ended, which means you can trim from either side of the cockpit. The cockpit lockers are demountable so you can open up the cockpit when racing with a full crew or you can leave them installed when cruising. Aft, the low transom folds down to make a swim platform with a sturdy stainless steel ladder. A life raft can be stowed aft in a compartment under the cockpit sole.

It is not often that a builder sup-

plies a spinnaker for sail trials, but the 36 Performance is designed to be a true dual-purpose boat, so we had a chute to fly. The big sail was in a snuffer, which made it simple to hoist and deploy. Tacked down to the retractable carbon bowsprit, the asymmetrical chute really pulled the 36P along sweetly. Sailing at about 150 degrees apparent, the boat sailed as if on rails and accelerated noticeably in the early puffs of the sea breeze.

All in all, the 36P was a true pleasure to sail. We did not get the chance to crank it up around a race course, but later in the summer the Dufour dealers at North Star Yachts and a crew took the 36P to the Buzzard's Bay Regatta in Massachusetts and won the 22-mile distance race on the first day.

CRUISING ACCOMMODATIONS

The 36P has simple yet elegant accommodations for living aboard. The forward cabin has a V-berth with storage underneath and lockers for clothes. The after cabin has a large double berth and plenty of locker space; ventilation is via a large verti-

cal hatch in the cockpit well.

The galley is surprisingly large for a 36-footer, with a Corian counter, double stainless steel sinks, a large fridge and a two-burner propane stove. Across from it is a large head compartment with an integral shower. The head is spacious enough to be a good wet locker for foul weather gear when racing or sailing in heavy weather.

The bench settees to port and starboard are long enough to be extra berths. Between them is a centerline table with drop leaves and a top-loading wine locker.

The whole atmosphere below decks is bright and modern without being too Euro-trendy. The fixed ports in the hull and the cabin sides are long and narrow but let in a lot of light and provide a limited outside view when seated. Overhead white

panels highlighted with wood battens provide a pleasant traditional yacht finish to the cabin.

Two couples will be very comfortable cruising aboard the 36P. For regattas, you can fit six with two sleeping forward separated by a bundling board, two in the saloon and two in the aft double. The boat can be raced with six, although you may want an extra body or two in windy conditions.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Designed by Italian Umberto Felci, the 36P has a distinctive look with a plumb bow, fairly plumb stern, very long waterline and flat sheer. The hull has a slight chine in the after sections that adds to hull volume aft and should add a bit of power when the boat is reaching.

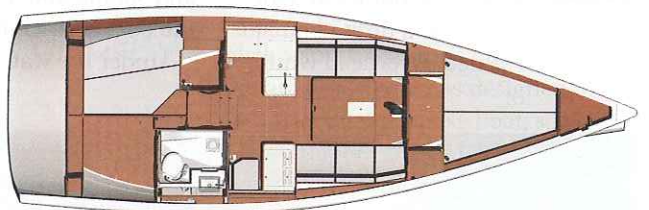
Under the water the boat has a

high aspect, cast iron fin keel with a standard depth of seven feet, two inches. A shoal draft keel is also available. The spade rudder has been designed with a semi-elliptical shape that gives it a good bite on the water and a great feel when sailing upwind in the groove.

The 9/10ths fractional rig, with two swept back spreaders, has an aluminum mast that is stepped on the top of the keel. The standing rigging is discontinuous stainless wire so you can tune the rig accurately. It comes with a rigid boom vang and a carbon sprit forward that fits neatly inside the starboard bow.

The hull is foam core above the waterline and solid composite below the waterline. Wide longitudinal stringers run the length of the hull on both sides just above the waterline, which adds to hull stiffness





mount, chain plates and keel bolts.

and strength. Inside the hull, the builders use a pan liner to add stiffness, which becomes the foundation for interior joinery and the engine

With a displacement of 14,000 pounds and a working sail area of 776 square feet, the 36P is fairly light and powerful. The sail area to displacement ratio is 21.6, which fits right into the racing end of the racer-cruiser fleet.

A solid, well built boat, the 36P benefits from Dufour's long heritage building production boats and their more recent commitment to designing and building boats that sail better and faster than many production designs.

Dufour 36 Performance

LOA	36'0"
LWL	33'6"
Beam	11'10"
Draft	7'0"
Displ.	14,109 lbs.
Ballast	4,188
Sail area	776 sq. ft.
Mast height	57'8"
Engine	29 hp diesel
Water	53 gals.
Fuel	24 gals.
Holding	12 gals.

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Photo: George Day