

A test sail of a new cruising cat and a look at a fleet of new coastal cruisers

Leopard 40

South African catamaran specialist Robertson and Caine has been known for building production boats that were distinctively South African, with bridgedeck clearances slightly lower than those seen on French or Canadian cruising cats and hull shapes a bit wider in the stern to provide more buoyancy aft. The thinking was that a lower bridgedeck reduces the boat's center of gravity—



with the added bonus of reducing freeboard and maximizing interior volume, while broad sterns provide superior load-carrying ability.

The new Leopard 40 is a radical departure. The Moorings, Robertson and Caine's primary customer, turned to the American design firm Morrelli & Melvin for a whole new look.

Morrelli & Melvin is best known for designing Steve Fossett's *PlayStation* and other large, record-breaking cats. As soon as I took the helm of the Leopard 40 during a test sail off Miami's South Beach, it was obvious that this boat was not designed just to have a spacious interior.

On a close reach in 12 to 15 knots of breeze and a slight chop, the boat hit 10 knots in a short-lived gust and consistently sat in the 8-to-9-knot range. I wasn't constantly tweaking

sails or even concentrating on boat speed. The boat tacked through 80 degrees and, unlike many cruising cats I've experienced, the helm had some feel. We logged similar speeds on other points of sail, and the boat tracked beautifully, feeling light and maneuverable. Granted, this was a new boat that hadn't been weighed down with cruising gear, but the numbers are testament to the design's potential.

Pete Melvin, who was on board for the test, said, "This 40-footer is 4,000 pounds lighter than the Leopard 38 it's replacing." Yes, 2 tons lighter and 2 feet longer. The hulls and interior

Above: The Leopard 40 hauls the mail off Miami, Florida. **Below:** The helm station is user-friendly (left), and the interior blends seamlessly into the cockpit



Leopard 40 photos by Peter McGowan



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Cooks are close to the action in the galley up on the bridgedeck

which is mounted on the back of the coachroof. Both main and jib sheets lead to stoppers and self-tailing winches directly adjacent to the helm. There's room for two on the bench-style helm seat, but you need only one to trim sails. Visibility is excellent over the coachroof, and a sliding trap door in the hard cockpit roof makes it easy to see the shape of the main. The cockpit also gets high marks for its ergonomics. The aft deck flows seamlessly into the cockpit (there are no steps up), and the settee is big enough to be comfortable without impeding the traffic flow.

The interior is as well thought out as the sailing systems. The starboard hull is dedicated to an owner's cabin, and the port hull houses two guest cabins. But as with all cruising catamarans, onboard life centers around the cockpit and saloon. The

Leopard scores here with oversized sliding doors that virtually eliminate the boundary between the two areas. Large forward-facing saloon windows provide excellent light and visibility; exterior louvers provide shade and steps up to the top of the coachroof. Cooks and helmsmen alike will love the well-equipped galley up on the bridgedeck. Its hinged countertop opens adjacent to the helmsman and is directly connected to the countertop in the galley. Galley crew can simply slide lunch down the counter. **BILL SPRINGER**

\$309,000 (sailaway, FOB Cape Town, South Africa). **LOA** 39'3"; **LWL** 37'6"; **beam** 20'1"; **draft** 3'10"; **displ.** 16,820 lbs; **sail area** 1,030 sq ft; **fuel/water/waste** 92/206/45 gal; **power** (2) 19-hp Volvos. **The Moorings Private Sales**, 954-462-3075, www.mooringsprivate.com

SAIL REVIEW

furniture have been made lighter, without sacrificing strength or stiffness, by using high-quality balsa core and vacuum-bagging. Melvin also explained the importance of the bridgedeck underbody. "We designed at least 3 feet of bridgedeck clearance to minimize slap. The lighter hull will ride over the waves better, and the sharp bows and clean underbody profile minimize drag."

The cockpit is also full of fresh thinking, notably at the helm station,

DAY TRIPPER

Measuring in at over 42 feet long and displacing more than 17,000 pounds, the **Bruckmann Daysailer** is designed to be an easy-to-sail head-turner with graceful lines and long overhangs that's equally at home on a harbor cruise or a weekend getaway. The final product seems to be up to the task. The light, stiff hull is a composite of Corecell, E-glass, and vinyl ester resin. The decks are uncluttered, the cockpit is deep, and the standard aluminum rig carries almost 900 square feet of sail. A carbon rig is also available. The interior is minimal, but well-suited to its design brief.

Down below, you'll find luscious woodwork and fine joinery instead of multiple cabins. The



Bruckmann Daysailer

accommodations do include a well-proportioned galley with refrigeration, a microwave, and plenty of stowage space for provisions along with a stainless-steel sink and propane stove. The saloon can accommodate eight for dinner or drinks, but the boat is really designed for a very lucky

couple to sleep aboard. The only private sleeping area is located in the well-ventilated forepeak; the boat will sleep four (two on the long bench seats in the saloon) if necessary. **\$495,000** (base, FOB Ontario, Canada). **Alden Yacht Sales**, 617-227-9480, www.aldenboats.com **B.S.**