

## Cruising World

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Gracious, Spacious, and Swift. Neatly designed and sensibly equipped, the Dolphin 460 promises to reel off miles in style

IMPORTER PHIL BERMAN describes the Dolphin 460 as a luxury performance catamaran for experienced cruisers who won't hesitate to cross oceans. All of the 2005 Boat of the Year judges agreed: The 460 meets its design brief quite well. Bluewater sailors will especially appreciate the wing clearance of over 2 feet and the spaciousness below that includes real sea berths.

The 460, designed by Philippe Pouvreau, is among the few production cruising cats to feature spade rudders and daggerboards. The relatively thick sections of the boards suit a forgiving performance profile and snugly fit their cases.

Cruisers will love the shallow draft, and should they want to dry the boat out completely, the skegs protect the two-bladed props of the two saildrives. I'd fit inspection plates to the board trunks to access the board tackles. The boat's efficient full-roach main is controlled by twin sheets at the aft end of the cockpit instead of a traveler. I was sorry the nicely crafted optional carbon wing mast on the test boat wasn't allowed to rotate (it was the owner's preference). Still, the 460 moved very well.

Although the sail area-to-displacement ratio is a modest 17.8, we easily expanded the working sail area by unrolling the screecher from the bowsprit, which sent the Dolphin off in a flash. The Dolphin yard in Aracaju, Brazil, vacuum bags multiaxial fabrics over a Divinycell foam core to keep the boat light, stiff, and easy to drive. First-class equipment, including Goiot windlass and furling systems and Antal winches and stoppers, complement the Dolphin's clean construction and attractive finish.

The Boat of the Year judges suggested such modifications as repositioning the switches for the windlass and the engine throttles to prevent inadvertent operation when the helmsman moves about. A worthwhile bimini alteration would be a cutout on the port forward corner to improve manual operation of the jibsheet winch. The 460 maneuvers superbly under power, but engine access to the two Volvo 40-horsepower diesels through a hatch in the transom steps seemed tight and vulnerable to seas entering from astern.

Another concern was the position of the LP locker in the port bow, which could sustain damage in a collision. However, such details appear simple to correct on a semicustom boat, as Dolphin works closely with its owners.

Overall, we found the boat well conceived and executed. BOTY judge Bill Lee liked the stern boarding arrangement, with secure bulwarks flanking the stairway and a

stainlesssteel grabrail on the inside. The deck offers superb footing on wide landings and good handholds.

The well-lit interior is finished with a blend of woods. Fellow judge Tom Prior noted the storage capacity and, like the rest of us, loved the three-cabin layout of the test boat, with an owner's suite and office in the starboard hull. The saloon offers a nicely sculpted settee and a large galley. It's also good to know that the Dolphin 460 sailed to Annapolis, Maryland, from Brazil on its own bottom. I wouldn't mind taking the 460 for a spin in the opposite direction.

BOTY judge and author Steve Callahan has taught small-craft naval architecture, with a specialty in multihull design.