

The Dolphin 460, built in Brazil, is a genuine ocean cruising catamaran...



DOLPHIN 460

AN OWNER'S CATAMARAN

THE DOLPHIN 460, BUILT IN BRAZIL, IS A CATAMARAN RESOLUTELY AIMED AT OWNERS LOOKING FOR A BOAT WHICH IS FAST, LIGHT YET PLEASANT TO LIVE ABOARD...

In vivid contrast to boats intended primarily for the charter market, the Dolphin 460 stands apart: every aspect of the boat is designed and built for private ownership and blue-water cruising. The boat's Brazilian builder, Jr. Pimenta, and the boat's French designer, Philippe Pouvreau, are the team behind the 25 Dolphin 460's produced thus far by Dolphin Catamarans in Aracaju, Brazil. The boat is characterized by strong yet weight-efficient construction, relatively slender hulls (the hull

beam/length ratio is 11.2), a generous sailplan, deep daggerboards, and a galley-up accommodation plan that, along with optional layout customization, caters to liveaboard owners. The result is a cruising catamaran with the potential to take her owners safely across oceans while providing a comfortable, homelike environment at anchor. Now five years into production, the Dolphin 460 is establishing itself not only as an affordable bluewater cat but as a boat that delivers value for

money—in a number of areas, the Dolphin offers custom-yacht construction and features at a production-boat price.

CONSTRUCTION

At 9,019 kg (19,841 pounds) the Dolphin 460's light-ship displacement is modest—especially considering that all of the boat's interior spaces are finished with vinyl or wood-trimmed panels rather than

the stippled-resin treatment (along with exposed backing plates and fasteners) of other production cats. The Dolphin's hulls are of vacuum-bagged Divinycell/vinylester composite construction; the decks are vacuum-bagged polyester /Divinycell; structural bulkheads are cored with Divinycell; furniture panels and cabinetry utilize feather-weight Nida-Core with a wood-grain laminate finish. The key to the Dolphin's light displacement is the careful use of an impregnation

Pretty, classic lines, an efficient hull, and serious construction: this is the Dolphin 460.



machine and vacuum-bagging; builder Jr. Pimenta estimates that these construction processes save 500 kg (1,100 pounds) over conventional hand layup methods.

To further save weight, bands of uni-directional glass are used in high stress areas, such as reinforcement in the daggerboard trunks and a large “X” in the deck laminate that runs from the mast step to the hulls. The Dolphin 460 features watertight “crash” bulkheads forward in the hulls, a one-piece main bulkhead that spans the entire beam of the boat and ties the hulls and bridge-deck together, and a hull/deck joint that is glassed on both the inside and outside, turning the hull and deck into a strong, leak-proof unit. The hull/deck joint characterizes Pimenta’s and Pouvreau’s construction philosophy: Glassing the joint takes many more hours than mechanically fastening it, but a glassed joint is superior in every way—so that’s the way we’ll do it. This approach, carried forward into many other areas of the Dolphin, has pushed the boat’s construction a step above that of the average production cat. And it also explains why each boat takes more than 20,000 man-hours to build.

Many of those hours are spent fashioning and installing the boat’s interior. Forty-five of the 150 workers at Dolphin Catamaran (the company also builds large catama-

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ran workboats, dive boats, and fast ferries) are woodworkers. There is an ongoing system of training and apprenticeship at the factory; for example, Paulo, the master woodworker at Dolphin, in addition to leading his woodworking team at the factory teaches his craft at the local training college. In terms of size, Dolphin Catamarans is in a good position—big enough so that many hands can be applied when and where they are needed, but small enough so that Philippe, who is an exacting, hands-on shaper of the Dolphin 460, can keep his eye on all of the details of each boat.

SYSTEMS

The Dolphin 460 is powered by twin Volvo D240 40-hp diesels (4-cylinders, 115-amp alternator). Each engine has a 100-amp hour starting battery; the house battery bank is 450 amp hours. Many Dolphin 460 owners have specified their boats with all the liveaboard amenities—diesel genset, air-conditioning, watermaker, refrigerator/freezer,

icemaker, and electric main halyard winch, as well as stereos and entertainment systems. But few owners thus far have utilized the unobstructed area of the boat’s optional Divinycell-cored hardtop bimini, which is perfect for a 1,000-watt array of solar panels, which would generate about 330 amps hours per day. Overall, the Dolphin’s systems are well-executed. The boat is wired according to American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC) specifications, and major equipment items, such as the windlass, watermaker, and genset, are properly sized and installed. The boat carries 450 liters (119 gallons) of water and 450 liters of fuel in molded-epoxy tanks.

INTERIOR

The quality of the Dolphin 460’s interior is impressive. The boat combines easy-care laminates (stratfill teak-and-holly cabin sole, wood-grained laminate-face cabinetry and hull panels) with stylish vinyl-and-wood overhead panels and well-positioned, quality lighting.

The woodwork, of various Brazilian hardwoods, is well-drafted and attractive throughout—the boat’s joinerwork and finish are on a par with that of a custom yacht.

The standard accommodation plan devotes the starboard hull to the owner. The master cabin, with two hanging lockers, plenty of stowage behind sliding doors, and a queen-size berth, has full headroom and space for getting dressed. Forward, there’s a large shower and head with vanity (and room for a washer/dryer installation). The midships layout (usually, a desk or storage area) is up to the owner, which is an attractive option that Dolphin Catamarans offers to clients: the factory will build the interior plan of the owner’s choice (really!). In this respect each 460 is a semi-custom project; variations have ranged from a “deco” type saloon treatment to alternative galley layouts (stove aft instead of forward, or a pantry in the port hull) to “his and hers” offices/computer workstations in the hulls. In the standard plan, the port hull features an aft guest cabin with hanging locker, a head/shower amidships, upper and lower single berths outboard of the daggerboard trunk, and a single berth forward.

Located on the bridgedeck, the galley is large—two people can work side-by-side—and the view out of the wraparound Lexan cabinhouse

**Daggerboards and carbon:
a catamaran with character!**



“ **Under main and genoa
in 12 to 15 knots of wind, the boat sails
to windward at about 9 to 9.5 knots!** ”

windows keeps the cook connected with the world outside as well as with guests in the saloon. The dinette seats six; a drop-down table (a popular option) converts the saloon into a lounging spot for watching videos (some Dolphin owners have opted for an entertainment area in lieu of the nav station) or resting (and staying close to the helm) while off-watch.

PERFORMANCE

Under power, the Dolphin 460 cruises at 8.5 to 9 knots. Under main and genoa in 12 to 15 knots of wind, the boat sails to windward at about 9 to 9.5 knots. With daggerboards down the Dolphin makes very little leeway—a welcome change from chartercats with minikeels. The boat’s large genoa, though, requires some muscle to grind in after tacking (the builder is considering adding a self-

tacking jib option). Under screecher the boat reaches at close to 10 knots in 12 knots of wind; some Dolphin owners report hitting 17 knots and logging 240-mile 24-hour runs in trade wind conditions. The boat’s bridgedeck clearance (65 cm, or 25 inches, at full load) is adequate for ocean sailing, and the boat responds well to the rudders (steering is hydraulic). The sailhandling layout is simple, though “Mom and Pop” cruisers may want to increase the size of the primary winches and relocate the mast-mounted halyard winch (jib, screecher, spinnaker, and mainsail topping lift) to the cabintop, with appropriate sheet stoppers. For bluewater cruising, the Dolphin will turn in very respectable daily runs in most conditions and on most points of sail, and can be handled by a cruising couple (most owners have equipped the boat with at least one electrically-powered winch, usually for the main halyard).

CONCLUSION

For sailors intrigued by the benefits to be found by going beyond the chartercat formula but stopped by the cost of a custom yacht, the Dolphin 460 offers a unique mix of value and custom-yacht features. Phillip Berman, president of The Multihull Company, the U.S.-based international distributor of the Dolphin (there are also agents in France and Italy), has been instrumental in helping owners get the boat they want (offering layout plans, options, and more online) and in advancing the Dolphin 460. Even with a production boat, you can never lose the drive—in Pimenta’s and Pouvreau’s case, it is closer to passion—to make each boat better than the one before it. Catamarans, after all, are the best pure evidence of the advantages of evolution.



A nice cockpit, where you can welcome your guests...



A boat which makes you want to sail the seas on the other side of the world...



Fast, pleasant to sail; the Dolphin is a boat for demanding owners.



The steering position offers a good view over the whole of the boat.



The accommodation is bright and pleasant to live in.



The fittings, like the construction in general, radiate 'seriousness'.



The construction quality, like the finishing, is of a high level, in the galley as well as in the rest of the boat.



The cabins are well-ventilated, and there is plenty of stowage space...

“ **Some Dolphin owners report hitting 17 knots and logging 240-mile 24-hour runs in trade wind conditions** ”

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- Builder:** Dolphin Catamarans
- Designer:** Philippe Pouvreau
- Distributor:** The Multihull Company
- Length** 13.9 m
- Waterline length** 13.9 m
- Beam** 7.4 m
- Unladen weight** 9.9 t
- Displacement, loaded** 12.1 t
- Draft** 1.1 m / 2.3m
- Mast height** 17.6 m
- Air draft** 20 m
- Mainsail area** 56 m²
- Jib area** 51 m²
- Screecher area** 85 m²
- Spinnaker area** 90 m²
- Engines** 2x 40 hp diesel
- Price of basic version** \$480,000 U.S.