

NEW BOATS HUNTER 22



Hunter 22

A versatile daysailer and weekender | BY CHARLES J. DOANE

The new Hunter 22 is directly derived from its predecessor, the Hunter 216, which was built out of thermoformed Luran-S plastic. The 22 retains the 216's hull, which features a large cockpit and open transom, but is built in fiberglass with a solid bottom section and balsa-cored topsides. The deck, also balsa-cored, has been altered a bit, as has the rig, which is 40 square feet larger. Like its predecessor, the 22 sports a hydraulically controlled swinging ballast keel.

In essence, the Hunter 22 is designed to carefully straddle a line between “fun family daysailer and weekender” and “go-fast mini-sportboat.” You elect which half of the dichotomy to favor in selecting options. The performance package features a full mid-cockpit traveler, hiking grips and straps in the cockpit, a retractable bowsprit and an asymmetric spinnaker. The cruising package includes a V-berth in the small cuddy cabin, a portable toilet and a simple electrical system.

The boat I test-sailed belongs to Hunter's Steve Pettengill, who is definitely a go-fast sort of guy. He races his slightly modified 22—it has laminated sails, a squarehead mainsail, plus a solid boom vang and head-sail furling rod—in a local series in St.

Augustine, Florida, and is competitive, he tells me, with much larger boats. In all other respects his is a stock boat, with a standard Seldén aluminum mast that is stepped on a hinged tabernacle and can be raised by one person in a matter of minutes.

Conditions during my sail with Steve were a bit boisterous—the wind on St. Augustine's Matanzas River was blowing a tad under 20 knots with gusts that were significantly higher. We therefore elected to put a reef in the mainsail and after just a few minutes on the water also roller-reefed the jib (an option you would not have with a standard jib, which furls on its own luff).

Probably the most important difference between the old 216 and this new boat is the rudder. The old boat featured a “VARA inboard lifting rudder” that slid up and down in a large rotating barrel set in the aft end of the cockpit floor. This was a very strong installation, but the steering response was poor. The new 22 comes with a conventional rudder turning on a hinge at the transom, which I found steered precisely and easily, even in the strong conditions we encountered.

Boat speed was excellent. I found the hull surfed readily off the wind, even without a

spinnaker, accelerating to 8 knots and more. Playing the reefed main, we had no trouble keeping the boat on its feet while hiking out. All controls were well placed and easy to use, and the boom is situated high enough that we could tack very comfortably without stooping or crouching.

In all respects this new 22 looks like a win-win proposition for Hunter Marine. It is faster, more responsive and easier to maintain than its predecessor. Conservatively sailed it is stable and user-friendly and should make a great starter-boat for young families who are just beginning to explore the sport of sailing. Tricked out as a performance boat, it will also prove a rewarding ride for experienced sailors who smile the most when things are fast and furious. *AL*



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 21ft 4in // **LWL** 18ft 9in

BEAM 7ft 11in

DRAFT 1ft (keel up); 3ft 6in (keel down)

DISPLACEMENT 1,700lb

BALLAST 400lb

SAIL AREA 293ft²

DESIGNER Glenn Henderson

BUILDER Hunter Marine Corp., Alachua, FL, 386-462-3077, huntermarine.com

PRICE \$20,995 (base, including trailer)

PERFORMANCE

RACER CRUISER