A sporting trimaran that offers incomparable enjoyment at the helm...

DRAGONFLY 920

On board the Dragonfly 920 Extreme, you immediately get the right feeling...

The undeniable plus point of the Dragonfly: a simple and effective method of retraction.

Fast is fun

TEXT AND PHOTOS: PHILIPPE ECHELLE

IS THE "FOLDING ATTITUDE" A PURELY ANGLO-SAXON CONCEPT WHOSE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IS RESTRICTED TO US AND BALTIC WATERS? WE MAY WISH THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE, BUT IT MUST BE RECOGNISED THAT IN SPITE OF ALL THEIR INCONTROVERTIBLE ADVANTAGES, THESE BOATS ARE NOT MAKING INROADS INTO THE MARKET IN SOUTHERN EUROPE. IS THIS A QUESTION OF CULTURE OR PRICE? LET'S USE THE LAUNCH OF THE DRAGONFLY 920 "EXTREME" AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVISIT THIS ATTRACTIVE SECTOR OF THE MARKET THROUGH THIS SOUPED-UP, TOP-OF-THE-RANGE MODEL.

A beautiful high performance boat... What more could you ask for!

extreme

A PRETTY FORMIDABLE FAMILY!

The lively "flexible multihull" family has unique qualities and has as its basis an ambition to square the circle: they need to be sporty, companionable and light (in terms of weight and maintenance costs!). Some of them have achieved this, and these well-endowed boats are practical, well built and often very fast and seaworthy. These are boats that love exploring lagoons and rias. They do away with the need for costly berthing facilities and provide fun-filled day-to-day cruising. They are as happy at sea as they are at anchor in a river, or beached in an otherwise inaccessible lagoon. They also have an additional attraction: in the midst of standardised mass-production, they show an enticing diversity, and exhibit a proliferation of design solutions. Relatively uncommon, they often exhibit superlative qualities, except for one area: living space!

First of all there were the precursors, James Wharram (Tiki 21', 26' and Pahi 26'), Tony Smith with the Telstar and Newick with the 9.60m trimaran Tremolino. The French brought their usual creative flair (but modest commercial success) to the concept: Triagoz 26', Freely 8m, Speed 944, Diabolo and then Aquilon and Challenge 30. All attempts to match the fame and longevity of the two heavyweights in the category have failed: The American Corsair and the Danish Dragonfly! Several hundred of each of these swinging-arm trimarans have been manufactured, and are found in every big event (San Francisco-Hawaii, Round Britain etc.) Both manufacturers share a market made up of demanding customers who are all true aficionados of fast multi-hulls. Only a Route du Rhum or a Europe 1 Star are missing from the prizes taken by these original machines! The challenge has been made. Who will take it up?

DRAGONFLY: FROM THE 800 TO THE 920 EXTREME

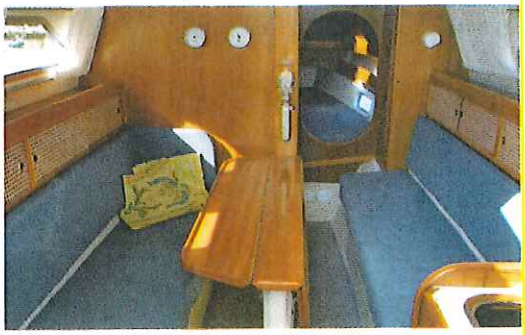
Börge Quorning designed the first versions of the Dragonfly 800 back in 1967. At first the little

Beaching this type of boat is really simple. It would be a shame to do without one!

Top-of-the-range deck gear and a deck plan that will draw nothing but admiration.

Accommodation is comfortable for a family with two children or for a crew of three adults.

Magnificently finished, the teak woodwork is warm and functional, and the many clever ideas used for organising the accommodation reveal the boatyard's eye for detail.



"painted skimmer" was equipped with fixed crossarms, and then the "swing-wing" system produced the parallelogram that folded in a horizontal plane (allowing the outer hulls to pivot, without immersing their sides in the water). Paul Elvström and his daughter were responsible for creating part of the prize-winning legend of this victory-hungry craft (which took the microclass world championship in 85, 86 and 88). This flying insect legend was confirmed around the British Isles when it brought home the honours in a 1,800 miles offshore race! The 920, the 1000 and the 1200 were to follow, with the small factory exporting to about thirty countries and manufacturing 25 units a year. The 400 or so Dragonfly 800's were to be followed by over a hundred 920's (cruising and racing) before the second generation sports development, the Extreme, was to appear.

EXTREME... DID YOU SAY EXTREME?

This description applied to a trimaran might seem to be something of a heresy, and suggests that the product is something that is staggeringly unusual. It is nothing of the sort, and if the "Extreme" was an automobile, its maturity and balance would make you think of such aristocrats of the tarmac as the Sierra Cosworth, the Lancia Integrale or the Subaru Impreza WRC! Before we go for a spin, let's take a look at the chassis and the engine together.

The central hull comes from the 920 mould. It is made using a foam/glass/vinylester sandwich and the "monolithic" bottoms lend themselves perfectly to beaching. The easy-going profile hides high-performance and characteristic water lines: A bow-on view reveals an impressive finesse, with the knife-blade water inlets overhung by a hull step that houses the engine and excellent accommodation, furnishings and fittings. The triangular cross sections progressively increase in volume and flatten off squarely at the counter. The crossbeams are completely new, "crossed" and longer. This widening of the Extreme results in a gain of 1 metre, and a little dihedral is used to lift the float into the air as soon as it rests against it. The increased stability of the platform shows the designers' intentions and the "jumboisation" of the hulls confirms this strategy. After the geometry and the "connections to the floor", the "factory" tuners turned their attention to the 'engine': 1.50m of additional carbon fibre is used to boost the mainsail to 43m2 (from the 39m2 of the racing version) but above all the difference is to be seen in the spinnaker and the gennaker; each are increased by 10m2 (90 and 75m2 respectively). At sea this pumped-up dragonfly offers 60m2/t!

ACCOMMODATION AND VARIABLE GEOMETRY

If, when you go below deck on a trimaran like the Dragonfly, you can't get the idea out of your head that for the same price you could have had more space, then you're missing the point! (or you haven't tried it out!). The accommodation, in fact, is comfortable for a family with two children or for a crew of three adults (or 4 for a short period). Magnificently finished, the teak woodwork is warm and functional; the many clever tricks used for organising the accommodation (sliding bunk, chests beneath the descending gangway etc.) reveal the boatyard's eye for detail. The folding saloon table hides the keel-board cover, and a well-equipped toilet is installed aft of the pillar enclosure. A light, comfortable and cosy double berth takes up the forward area. As with many boats from the Baltic, the cockpit is an additional "room", and at anchor it is transformed into a closed panoramic saloon in five minutes, by the installation of an easy-to-use kit. The galley is not a simply an unlikely kitchenette. It is equipped with a powerful stainless steel two-burner stove and a sensible worktop. There's a twin-opening panel wall-locker that can be used for stowing utensils.

From the front the Extreme is handsome! Its curved crossbeams, elegant hull volumes and proportions are immediately obvious. The rake of the sail plan hints at speed that will be confirmed once we are on the water. It is also a wonderful technological tool, with the joints responsible for providing the variable geometry having been the subject of in-depth study and tuning; they are completely reliable. The treatment that has been inflicted on these boats by some of their owners or by the in-house developers, Jens and Henrik (several Formula 28 world championship prizes), is worthy of the name of "torture test" and is regularly repeated without any untoward effect on the structures. The principle involved means folding the two crossarms in the vertical plane (the float remains on the surface of the water and is moved toward the rear of the central hull). The easy and rapid change of shape of this parallelogram shows the technical expertise and design maturity of the boatyard. After releasing the

forward retainer and the locking link you have to open the two hidden locking devices aft of the crossarms in the cockpit coaming: a few turns of the winch brings the floats against the sides in less than thirty seconds. The operation is so easy that is can be carried out when approaching a berth to enable entry into a narrow space. Under sail the structural forces (vertical tractions, torsion etc.) are taken up by the adjustable jib booms that convert these forces into compressions (which are then absorbed by stiffeners: the sheet bar and the main pillar).

120 MILES IN 12 HOURS WITH THE DRAGONFLY EXTREME

The opportunity to take the first Extreme delivered to France from Lorient to La Rochelle was a slice of luck. Two of us sailed with Jean-Marc Le Goueff, the importer, who knows these trimarans like the back of his hand. Starting (electric) of the 9.9 Honda was instantaneous, and we pivoted easily by coupling the outboard to the tiller (using a single removable link pin), and with two whiffs of gas we left the pontoon and put out the mainsail.

The ergonomics of the deck plan meant that manoeuvres were made rapidly. The rudder and keel boards moved effortlessly and all operations are sensibly grouped together beneath the cover. The designers of this configuration have tested their boats, and it shows. The ergonomic theme concluded on a note of excellence with the Frederisksen bearing deck dear and the Andersen winches. Don't think about personalising your Dragonfly Extreme. There's no point. The boatyard has done it for you! With the genoa unfurled, I could observe the perfect layout of the sails (Elvström Pentex). The wind was only making twelve or so real knots, but we left the harbour roads at 10 knots. Soon out in the open sea, we sent out the asymmetric, sporting 135m2 of sail! After two gybes to leave the lee of Belle Ile, the fresher breeze (12-15 knots, with gusts of 18 knots) took us to the "péage d'Hoëdic" (the "Hoëdic tollgate") at the start of the run. With a choppy sea, the sailing session commenced. At 160° to the wind, often 170°, the direct route was a bit "stop-start" and the "dragon" purred along at eleven and a half knots. Luffing a few degrees made the speed increase sharply, and scalloping over the waves using a dynamic action on the rudder, our 'flying dragon' showed its teeth and surfed from crest to crest at between 14 and 16 knots. The rudder and the little tiller were a wonder. No cavitation, a powerful directional effect; steering required very little muscular effort - two fingers were all that was needed. Steering the 'little beastie' is truly child's play, and the helm response is of a very high level. This trimaran puts a permanent smile on your face! The apparent wind factory was running at full production. With sheets in the cleats we flew along for several hours. During the brief intervals when the wind rose (to around 20 knots) the trimaran came to life and surfed along the waves at 17 knots. On one occasion only was it necessary to check a line on starting to luff (but perhaps that was me being a bit too fierce). The Dragonfly's agility really showed up on this sea, and using the tiller was a real pleasure. The new geometry improves passage through rougher seas, and the increase in the beam and in the volume of the floats improves the agility of a platform that was already very quick (a few days later I made a trip at night in a 25 knot wind on board a 920 Racing and we regularly ran at 11 knots close to the wind in a very nasty choppy sea). I can now tell you that this performance were about 20% worse than those that we might have obtained without the paraphernalia that was being carried in the cabin (all the saloon equipment etc.) The duration and increased power on surfing depended on cutting a wave without submerging the steps, so that the boat pulled up slightly, and stayed above 20 knots! During a trip made when empty the next day, the performance of the Extreme in light winds was enthralling, especially on headings close to the wind...amazingly!

CONCLUSION

With the Extreme, Dragonfly have entered the ranks of the "nautical Porsches". Well-constructed, sporting but comfortable, it is still well-behaved and the performance levels do not prevent it being put to family use (which is unusual). On its first race outing it had great success in the Round the Isle of Wight and was only outstripped by 60-footers! The budget required for the boat is a large one, but the quality of manufacture, its reliability, the pleasure to be gained from sailing and the maintenance of resale price are exceptional. The enthusiasts have got it right. Ten units are already on the water, and the Extreme will without doubt become the flagship model of the boatyard. To be consumed without moderation as a skipper (if you have the wherewithal) or just as a crew member!

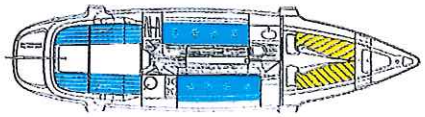
Plus points:

- Carefully built and designed
- A pleasure to sail under all conditions
- Racing-cruising compromise

Minus points:

- The skirt design
- The helmsman's seat would gain from being converted into a "wing" outside the cockpit.
- Removal of floats essential to achieve road transport dimensions

SPECIFICATIONS



- Designer: Börge and Jens Quorning
- Constructor: Quorning Boats Denmark
- Length: 9.20 m
- Waterline beam: 8.75 m
- Retracted length: 11.10 m
- Beam: 7.80 m
- Retracted Beam: 3.20 m
- Draught: 0.45/1.55 m
- Weight in running order without crew: 1850 kg
- Maximum allowable load: 700 kg
- Engine power: 9.9 HP outboard
- Crew: 5 persons
- Sailing Category: B
- Mast: 14.60 m
- Mainsail: 43 m2
- Rolling genoa: 25 m2
- Gennaker: 75 m2
- Asymmetric spinnaker: 90 m2
- Light genoa: 40 m2
- Mast, keel, rudder, jib-boom: Carbon fibre
- **Price: 159,786 Euros inc. taxes, without option, delivered to Lorient (for France)**

At the helm of the Extreme, at 15 knots...Contentment!