

ON TEST DRAGONFLY 28

She turned from innocent family saloon into nitrous-fuelled beast, a gnarly rocket ship of exhilarating performance

Sitting-out seats can fold up out of the way, doubling as dodgers

Coamings are low and uncomfortable for crew, who have a long stretch across benches to brace themselves. Alcoves in the coamings keep all the rope tails out of the cockpit

Performance with practicality

The 28 is not just another Dragonfly with a lick of go-faster paint. Jens Quorning has lavished her with design tweaks, producing a powerful, flared and roomy hull. Many of the changes have been thanks to CAD design technology – the floats now fold under and flush to the hull, which makes the folded beam narrow enough for the yacht to be trailed across Europe (2.54m).

She's a dry boat thanks to those exaggerated spray rails on her main hull, which deflect most of the spray downwards, while finding space for a vee-berth forward.

The folding 'swing-wing' mechanism has also been redesigned to make it easier to operate just by pulling the floats out on a continuous line from the cockpit without

demanding winching. And the outriggers have been extended a foot in front of the main hull to increase diagonal stability and reduce pitching, their distinct asymmetric shape providing greater buoyancy. So with a deeper 1.75m centreboard, she goes to windward better than her predecessors.

The other time I've sailed at over 15 knots this year was on a fully crewed 50ft canting keeler with an A-sail up in a Force 6. This time, however, we were off East Head in a Force 4-5 with just three of us. They do compare though: both felt electric and, when cranked up to peak boat speed, produce a unique high-velocity 'hum'.

After clearing the trots at Emsworth we raised that fat-head main, with a reef taken in to face the gusty sou-wester, and we were

off, windward float flying. It was like being teleported back to teenage Hobie-cat sailing. Immediately we hit double figures – 12-15knots at 45°T (she will point higher, but in exchange for a couple of knots).

That's where my figure-taking notes stopped, as concentration becomes critical at these speeds. The channel withies and moored boats approached so quickly that I had to be constantly on the alert. We tacked out past Hayling Island and into a 0.75m chop: even at 50° we were making 14 knots for the first mile before turning round and cracking off. Close reaching, she absolutely flew – spray flying, 15-17 knots, smoking.

And the thorn bush at the bottom of the sleighride never materialised. This was a stable, controllable, continuous experience.



A long bowsprit hinges round to the side and a Fortress anchor with weighted warp stores in a float locker, which makes it easy to use either fore or aft

Being beam-conscious means side decks start very skinny, but there's a high grabrail lining the coachroof

Cockpit lockers are big enough for lines and fenders – but there are huge lockers for all sorts of toys, perhaps even a stowaway, in each outrigger

It felt reasonably secure, not just sticking your heels down and hoping you stop before the piste ran out.

Those long asymmetric floats and that sharply wedged main hull pierce a path while dislodging most of the spray – indeed the only spray that finds its way aft is if you catch the windward float on a rogue wave.

The Dragonfly's sea-keeping ability isn't a surprise after the 35-footer won the European Yacht of the Year award two years ago when it gained the judges' votes in horrible conditions off the Dutch coast.

Flight control

Dumping the main is a doddle if things get hairy, likewise spinning the genny or kite sheets off the small winches – instead of

using self-tailers, the Andersen 28s have cam-cleats on the coachroof, so you can flick them off from the helm like a dinghy. On the odd occasion that she did 'stub a toe', or bury her leeward float, their buoyancy pointed her back to windward while providing enough time to dump the main.

Popping the large asymmetric saw her change into another gear as we headed back towards the harbour. With the kite up and the helm fully loaded, we maintained 16-17 knots off the wind. In fact, during the entire afternoon we rarely dropped below 13 knots! When we shook out the reef to do a bit of speed-reaching bravado, heel increased slightly, but speeds didn't.

It's the most exhilarating sailing I've done since a ride on an Extreme 40 cat last

year – and I enjoyed it as much. And like the in-vogue cat, you can feel every gust convert to acceleration. This Sport model has been very well-tuned to help you sail it safely to its potential. The genoa sheets tight to the tracks on the coachroof upwind and is attached to barber-haulers on each float, so you can set a beneficial shape offwind.

Equally, the main keeps shape offwind despite the lack of a traveller, by applying boom vang's either side. And the second reef line is an effective cunningham. Winches are small and manageable and an adjustable tiller and double-purchased mainsheet gives dinghy-like control.

The engine links like an autopilot arm to the tiller, so manoeuvrability is excellent, and the four-stroke 10hp manages 7 knots.

ON TEST DRAGONFLY 28

Small family comfort

This model does not have the usual traditional teak interior – rather, the Danes have chosen a modern, lighter look with Formica and maple offered as standard and teak as an option. Although almost 3ft shorter than the 920, the 28 provides more room below and an extra berth.

The two single saloon berths leave walkthrough access to the open heads and vee-berth and the raised cockpit allows for a large single berth below – the companionway slides across for access, with space for two kids.

The long saloon table has a drop leaf each side and footrests that raise to stop you sliding off the high berths. There's stowage below each saloon berth where backrests form a cushioned leaf to provide wide, long sleeping room. Headroom is largely restrictive (averaging 5ft 7in), other than in the companionway area, where standing room is available at the galley and navstation.

The heads is very basic, with just the sea toilet and sink: rather than add the necessary larger water tanks and sump pump for a shower, Dragonfly say clients prefer the use of a solar shower bag in the cockpit, with the sprayhood and optional cockpit tent making an adequate wet room – well, they are Danish.

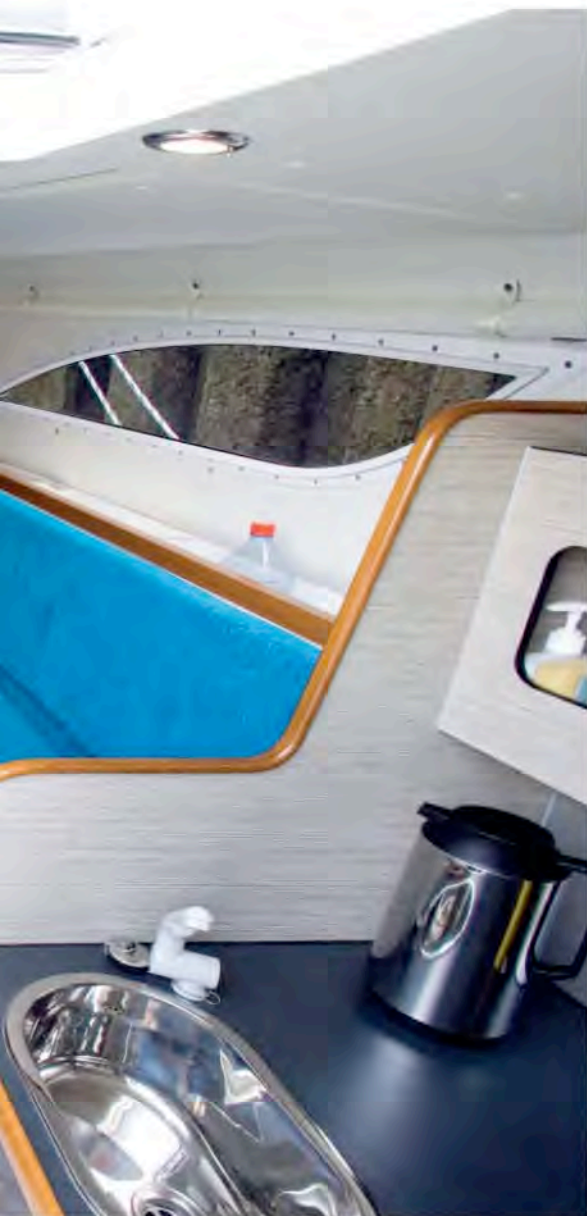


Beach belle – a stable platform aground, the 0.4m draught means you can explore secluded bays and take the ground where you please

Folded wings – the outriggers fold up simply, making it easier, safer and cheaper to berth. She

fits into a single marina berth, there is no guardrail to climb over and you can step ashore on the level

On the road – boat weight is just over 2,000kg, so an aluminum trailer is offered for £8,000 to keep the weight under the legal limit of 2.7 tonnes



Entry-level

The 28 is being seen as the long-term successor to the popular 920, which is now 13 years old and, despite an Extreme makeover in 2003, is starting to look a little dated. The 28 now represents the entry-level model at €30k cheaper than the 920.

She is offered in two guises. The Sport model we sailed is the carbon-rigged, high-tech sails model, whereas the cheaper Touring model has a 1.5m shorter aluminum mast and reduced sailplan.

Space has been bought in the cockpit by doing away with the traveller. The boom sheets directly to the sole.

Conclusion

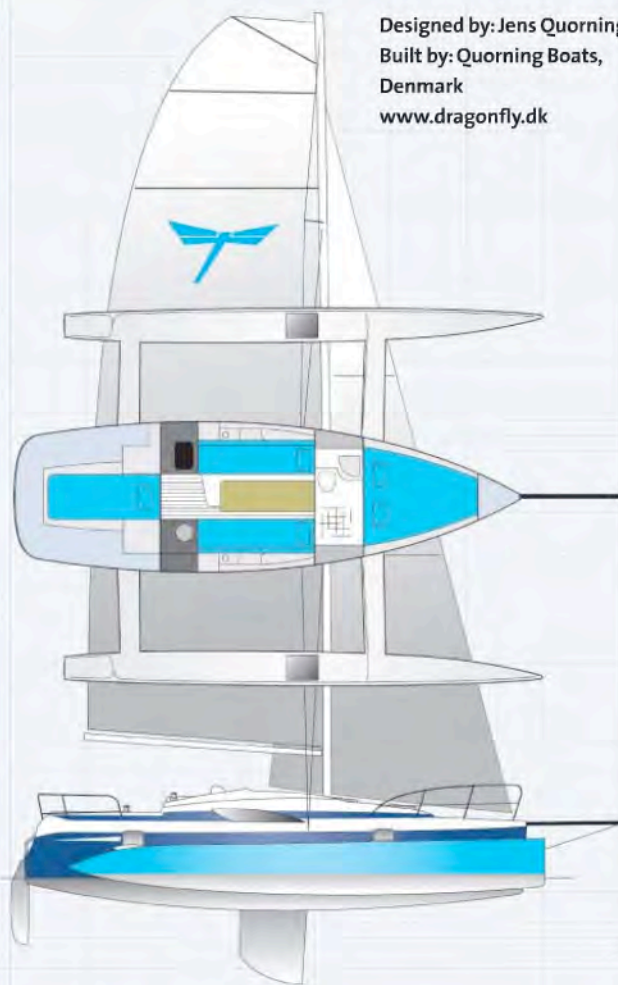
Astonishing performance is something Dragonfly have been offering for some time. But with her striking metallic livery, sporty rig, simple interior and the many tweaks Quorning has added to aid practicality, the 28 has changed with the times and represents an attractive go-faster option in a multihull market laden with bulky charter boats.

But this boat is being sold as a five-berth family cruiser, so with these speeds must come the vigilance and caution that seasoned performance multihull sailors develop naturally. Everything happens at two or three times the speed. So if you choose to take on the conditions – we were having a blast, but still reefed in 15-20 knots – then you must know your onions. Otherwise, keep adrenalin under wraps (difficult!), reef down and keep her on the level.

The 28 may not quite be a trailer-sailer, but she does offer independence. You can launch and rig the boat without paying for lifts and you can cruise for a week or even a season wherever you like, delivering and collecting her by road.

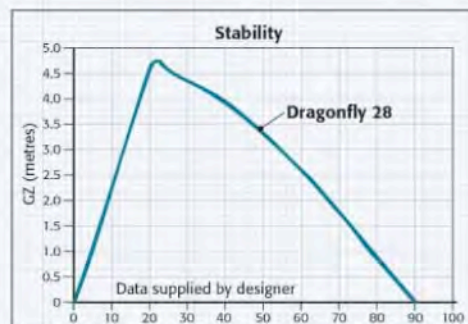
The thought of sailing in Scotland (at speed) on one holiday and in the West Country the next is an attractive and realistic proposition.

She's the ultimate versatile performer.



Designed by: Jens Quorning
 Built by: Quorning Boats, Denmark
www.dragonfly.dk

SPECIFICATIONS	Dragonfly Sport	
LOA	8.75m	28ft 9in
LWL	8.60m	32ft 6in
BEAM	2.54m/6.5m	8ft 4in/21ft 4in
DRAUGHT	2.10m/6.5m	1ft 4in/5ft 7in
DISP (LIGHTSHIP)	1,700kg	3,748lb
SAIL AREA (130% GENOA)	64.6m ²	212ft ²
BERTHS	5	
ENGINE	outboard	
POWER	7.46kW	10hp
WATER	80lt	18gal
SAIL AREA: DISP	17.7	
PRICE (EX VAT)	£93,043	



Note: GZ x Displacement gives actual Righting Moment (kg.m)