Dragonfly 35

Cruising sailors' experience of multihull sailing usually extends no further than a charter – ten days in the Med or Caribbean on a cumbersome cat with plenty of space but so-so performance. Either that or they have sailed on a racing cat, experiencing breathtaking speeds but sleeping in a shoebox.

But it doesn't have to be that way, as Danish family boatbuilders Quorning Boats prove with their latest launch, the Dragonfly 35. Hull volume is achieved by flaring above the waterline to give space for high-level lockers, but below the waterline, the centre hull presents a razor-fine entry, drawing out to near-flat aft sections to aid planing. Two versions of the 35 are available: the Ultimate version, which we sailed, and the Touring version, which has a 1.5m shorter mast and smaller sail area all round. Carbon is standard.

The most impressive of Quorning's innovations is the swing-wing system. Like her sisters, the Dragonfly 35's floats can hinge inwards to meet the centre hull, reducing the yacht's beam from a massive 8.2m to 3.85m and vastly improving versatility, marina fees and your popularity with monohull sailors. Surprisingly, the stability remains good – the fore and aft beams are angled down at 7°, depressing the floats as they fold and lifting the centre hull.

For a mono sailor, doing 20 knots with minimal heel is a strange experience

Although stowage in the centre hull is in short supply by the standards of a 35ft monohull, this is largely solved by redistributing certain items. It's important not to store heavy items in the floats as this impacts on buoyancy, but the Dragonfly has hatches to allow sail stowage and, uniquely to the 35, an aft hatch in the starboard float which will accept a kayak or a windsurfer and its mast. Each float is divided into three buoyancy chambers, which combine with a crash bulkhead in the main hull to class the boat as unsinkable, although the risk of sinking is much reduced by the lack of keel.

Under way

We sailed the Dragonfly in Denmark on a chilly December day of 20-30 knot winds and occasionally flurries of hail. After overcoming a slight reluctance to leave the pontoon or the comfort of the heated cabin, we set out to put this 35ft cruising boat through her paces. They were impressive.

Upwind, the Dragonfly forged ahead at 8 or 9 knots, occasionally touching 10 and tacking through 85-90° (dispelling the myth that multihulls can't go to windward). But the fun started on bearing away. Full main and headsail gave us around 15 knots off the wind

The direct-drive carbon helm is precise and positive

Passage plan at ten knots and you can rack up 100 miles and still be outside the restaurant when it opens for dinner

and as we neared a reach, the gennaker on its retractable bowsprit boosted that to 18 knots. It was like kicking in the turbo on a sports car – as the apparent wind shifted forward, we kept bearing away to hit 20.9 knots – not bad for a 35-footer. Quorning's owner, Jens Quorning, has since notched up 23 knots.

Sportsboat sailors are used to getting over a 'step' before the boat begins to plane, but the Dragonfly seems to have two. Quorning agreed.

"She's good in light airs up to her hull speed, about 8 to 8.5 knots," he said. "After that, you need quite a bit more wind to push her faster, until she starts to plane at 10.5 to 11 knots. Then there's another gear at 15 or 16 knots."

The practicalities of sailing at these speeds demand good cockpit design. Although a tiller is standard, our boat was fitted with a carbon wheel connected via a direct-geared drive to the rudder, resulting in a very precise, sensitive helm. The single, central rudder lost grip at times, but this was quickly recovered by briefly centring the wheel. Twin rudders would probably correct this, but would also compromise manoeuvrability under engine and complicate the foil protection arrangements; with the existing system, if the rudder or daggerboard touch bottom, their lines are released and they flick upwards until redeployed from the cockpit.

The mainsheet and traveller fall easily to the helmsman's hand and are serviced by a dedicated pair of winches, leaving the crew to manage the other lines via two primary cockpit winches and two winches on the coachroof. One of the coachroof winches is electric to aid hoisting the main, but through a neat bit of design can winch any line by using the other winches as idlers.

Above left: the swing-wing system hinges the floats against the main hull to reduce beam. Above: the gennaker adds another gear

There's a little more to think about than when sailing a mono – notably the centreboard and the hull folding gear – but the boat is well within the abilities of two people. There are plenty of performance tweaks to play with too, including a set of barberhaulers which pull the genoa sheeting point out to the floats when reaching.

Hull folding and unfolding is quick and easy thanks to a well-designed two-line system that tucks neatly into a cockpit locker, and a permanently fitted GRP cockpit hood arch hinges down behind the helm to provide a backrest when the cover is not in use – it's a bit like sailing from your sofa.

Under power the boat cruised at 6.5 knots from the 30hp Volvo saildrive, hitting a maximum of 8.4 knots, and proved adequately manoeuvrable when folded, with a turning circle of around 1.5 boatlengths and predictable performance astern.

Below decks

Stowage is always a problem in small hulls, but thanks to the sails being stored in the floats the space under the forward vee berth is free to use. Elsewhere, numerous small lockers have been fitted, closed at the front with a tidy wooden roll-top system.

Between the saloon and the forecabin is the heads and shower, stretching across the full width of the boat. Although standing headroom is available throughout, in the shower a folding seat above the heads offers the most elbow room. Two large lockers run the risk of a wetting and require judicious use of the shower curtain, but the loo roll gets special attention – a neat gadget rolls the end inside.

In the saloon the galley runs the length of the starboard side, with saddle-style seats hinged to the centreboard case, which can be used either to eat at table or to perch on while cooking. The case also supports the table with a drop-leaf to port, which, when hinged up, creates an L-shaped dinette or folded makes space for a double berth. Tankage is under the floor of the saloon, except the

Left: Quorning make the best of the narrow centre hull. Below: a shallow-draught trimaran often has no need of a dinghy

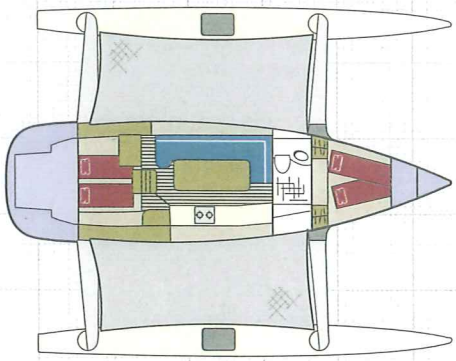
diesel tank which is under the aft berth.

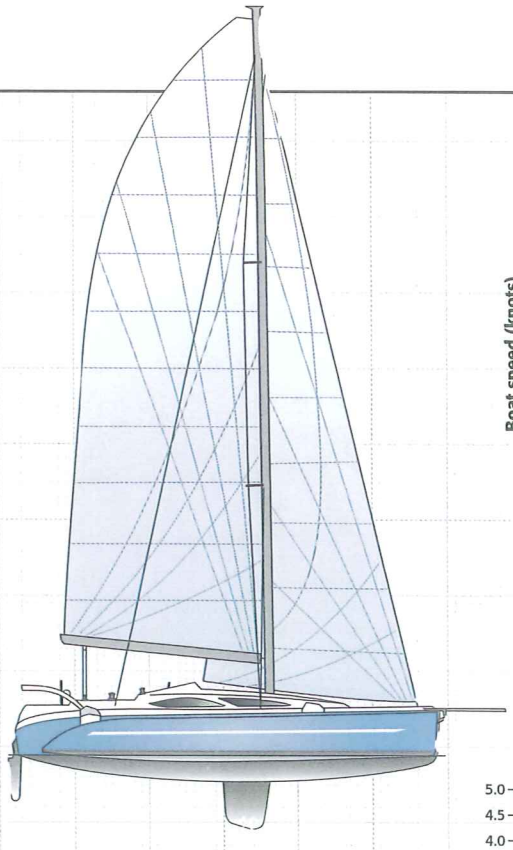
An aft facing nav station to port offers space for half-size Admiralty charts and instruments, and to starboard there's a 'wet seat' to sit down briefly before taking off your oilies. The aft cabin, although tucked under the cockpit floor, has sufficient headroom to sit up and is comfy as a double berth.

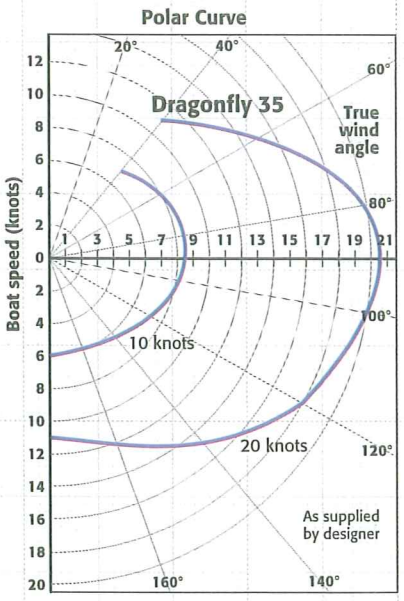
In accordance with Quorning's philosophy to keep everything wet and oily out of the cabin, engine access is via a huge hinged hatch abaft the helm.

Platform for performance

Although Quorning have worked wonders with the space available, helped by plenty of light from the oval portlights and clever use of horizontal grain to extend the perspective, the interior is not the Dragonfly 35 sales point. Sail performance is. Passage plan at ten knots and you can rack up 100 miles after breakfast and still be outside the restaurant when it opens for dinner. Get the right angles and sufficient wind and you could be doing 20 knots, usually the preserve of ocean race boats and adrenalin-junkie skiffs. The difference is, you can still make and drink a mug of tea.







Specifications	DRAGONFLY 35 ULTIMATE	
LOA	10.68m	35ft 0in
LWL	10.35m	34ft 0in
BEAM (MAX/MIN)	8.20m/3.85m	26ft 11in/12ft 8in
DRAUGHT	1.90m	6ft 3in
DISP (LIGHTSHIP)	3,900kg	8,598lb
BALLAST	–	–
SAIL AREA (100% FORETRIANGLE)	98.47m²	1,060ft²
BERTHS	4-6	
ENGINE	Volvo saildrive	
POWER	22.39kW	30hp
WATER	140lt	31gal
FUEL	80lt	18gal
SAIL AREA: DISP	40.4	
DISP: LWL	98	
PRICE (EX VAT)	£152,855