

Dennis TS500 kthrough

I CAUGHT my first glimpse of the TS500 as I surfaced off Parsons Marina, Williamstown, Victoria. Dick Underwood, sales manager of Dennis Yachts, builders of the TS500, was backing a brand new TS500 down the launching ramp and was wondering what I was doing in the muddy water with my best clothes on. He had just missed seeing me fall off the end of the wharf when I tried to step into a new-type flat-bottomed dinghy which didn't have the stability I imagined.

Anyhow, the TS looked pretty good from where I was treading water, so I decided to wade ashore and have a closer look. This particular boat, Number 15, was destined for Miller and Whitworth in Sydney for demonstrations, and had been a few barrels of resin and many yards of glass cloth a week before.

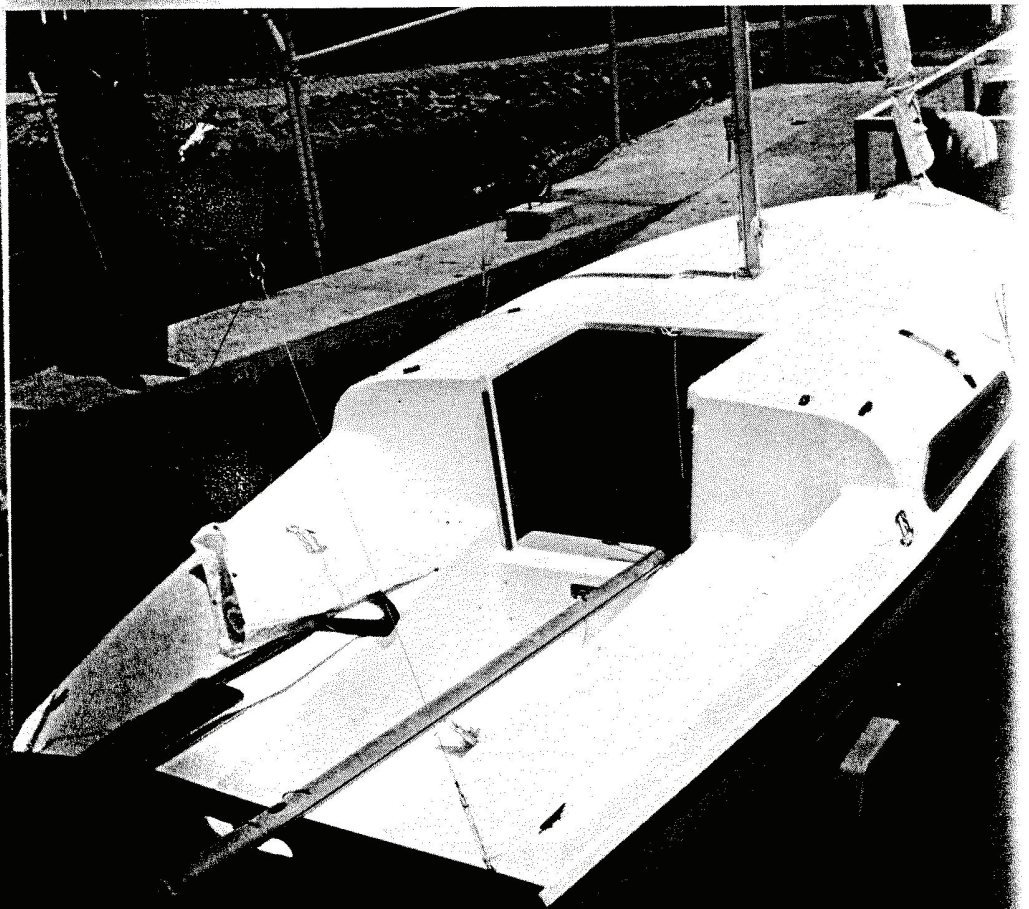
Dennis Yachts built this boat especially for the SEACRAFT test and

workmen were still busy putting the finishing touches to it the day *after* we tested it. (The finishing touches being teak varnish on the table top and spot-finishing of the deck and cockpit!)

Dennis Yachts claims the TS500 is the most spacious boat with the most usable cockpit and deck area of its type in this country. I agree. It looks much bigger than five metres. Its sloping non-skid raised deck gives full width sunbaking and its full length false floor creates four 2.1 m (7 ft) berths and ample space to stow a chemical toilet.

The 500 is high-sided by Australian standards. This makes it look bigger and gives sitting headroom below the companionway.

Price is a big selling point... and *Flat cabin top gives big area for leisure hours. Companionway hatch cover was not ready for the test — boards slip into vertical keepers and cover locks them in place. Alloy rudder box is well designed.*



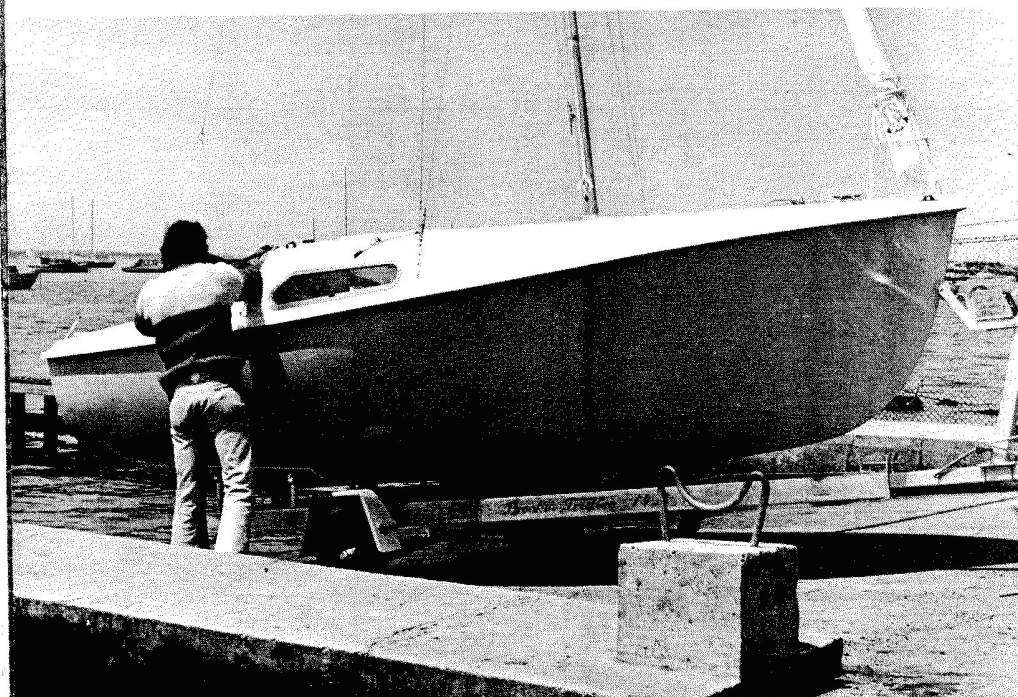


Top:

Cockpit seats four adults in comfort. Raised deck configuration allows safe walking and sunbaking. Initial heel was quick and then boat stiffened up.

Below:

Dick Underwood removes the tie-downs before launching. The 500 is an attractive little yacht with a lot going for it for a boat costing just \$2798.



TS Breakthrough

one reason why the order books are right into the New Year! For just \$2798 ex-factory one buys a fully equipped TS500 tax paid. Add a trailer and you are in the business of giving the family away from it all at week

An American building method costs. Hull is moulded, flat floor and then deck/cockpit one-piece married to the hull. Deck construction is foam sandwich and gives a high level of flotation when coupled with complete buoyancy compartment in under the full length floor.

I digress.

After wading ashore, and then Dick Underwood on the back to him choking (brought on by uncontrolled mirth), I changed into clothes and helped him rig the apologise to the women on the wharf; the blanket wasn't enough to screen both ends at. Anyway, they would have seen us (Cleo!)

Mast was easy to raise and fell uppers and lowers, backstay, forestays and crosstrees. A very complete rig for a TS. Mast is an untapered 470 section with go-fast square-back

Headsail and mainsail are conventional with simple lace-down cleat fixing points. Headsail sheet fairleads feature imported curved track which is also used on the \$2200 Dennis-built Olympic 470s. Standard controls include fixed mainsheet blocks and boom vang.

By the time we had the test boat afloat, several people had gathered around the ramp. As it turned out, two of them began waving their cheque books at Underwood, who put them on the waiting list.

As we sailed off across Hobson's Bay, I wondered about the story which claims the Yarra River is the only river in the world which flows upside down (mud up!). I had just learned it is the same yellow color two metres below the surface, and that night a bout of vomiting almost convinced me that Yarra River water isn't fit for drinking!

Yellow peril aside, it was a beautiful day. The sun was shining, the wind was eight knots from the south and the bay was calm. A perfect day for a sail.

We glided across the main channel on port tack and into Port Phillip Bay proper where the wind picked up and drove the TS500 along at a good clip. She heeled quickly yet felt stiff once the initial heel was passed. Several short tacks proved her manoeuvrability and showed that almost anyone could sail her in reasonable weather.

Headsail sheeting angle is wide in accepted TS style — and could be fiddled with by those in a hurry. I felt she could be squeezed higher to windward (by bringing the headsail angle in) in smooth water and light breezes.

While running back to our Williamstown base, I checked the bunks. Four big adults could sleep in this unique yacht but they would have to take turns (two at a time) sitting at the centreplate-mounted table... with feet in the cabin well.

The centreplate is most unusual. Its case is housed inside the false floor and it is raised by a simple multi-purchase block and tackle system mounted on the cabin roof directly above the centreplate.

This plate, with internal low-down ballast, gives almost 30 percent ballast ratio — enough to ensure self-righting.

The fully rigged boat (without crew) weighs 362.9 kg (800 lb) and the drop keel plate weighs 72.5 kg (160 lb). Internal ballast adds 45.4 kg (100 lb) to the righting formula — giving a 117.9 kg to 362.9 kg ballast ratio; that's about 30 percent.

The centreplate in standard form has its leading and trailing edges simply rounded off. The man who wants to improve performance would aerofoil-shape his centreplate and rudder blade.

Some vibration was felt in the rudder during our test sail. This, no doubt,

This picture, from the forestay, gives an idea of deck space and size of cockpit. Beam of 2.16 m (7 ft 1 in.) is not excessive. Note headsail track for fairlead. Nylon runner works smoothly.

could be cured with a little shaping and elbow grease.

As sold, the TS500's interior is basic without cupboards, stowage or a foredeck hatch. Only built-ins are a sturdy transom outboard pad to take an outboard stern bracket, mast support post, centreplate-top-mounted table (small with room to add leaves) and sit-around foot well.

The handyman owner could add home comforts and the little woman, no doubt, would run up curtains and bunk cushions and such.

I was very impressed by the Dennis TS. It has day sailing qualities plus the makings of reasonable accommodation for two adults and a couple of kiddies. Its accommodation layout is unusual

| FACT BOX | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| TS500 built by Dennis Yachts, 17B South Road, Altona, Victoria, 3018. All purpose family trailer sailer with self-righting capabilities. | |
| Length | 5 m (16 ft 5 in.) |
| Beam | 2.16 m (7 ft 1 in.) |
| Depth | 25 m (10 in.) |
| Keel plate | 1 m (39 in.) |
| Drop keel weight | 72.5 kg (160 lb) |
| Internal ballast | 45.4 kg (100 lb) |
| Complete weight | 362.9 kg (800 lb) |
| Ballast ratio | 30 percent |
| Centreplate | 4.9 m ² (53 sq ft) |
| Mainsail | 8.2 m ² (88 sq ft) |
| Forestay and jib have reef points. When reefed, mainsail measures 5.9 m ² (64 sq ft) and jib measures 3.3 m ² (35 sq ft). | |
| Price ex-factory | \$2798 |
| including tax (trailer extra) | |
| Outboard motor of up to 7.46 kW (10 hp) would be suitable for auxiliary power. | |
| Full length cabin floor gives four additional "bunks" and room to build in lockers, icebox and toilet as required. Foam sandwich deck construction and complete buoyancy compartment under cabin floor make the boat virtually unsinkable. | |

yet should win a lot of friends. Bikini girls will love its wide decks. Shapely family members could sunbake on the cabin top while dad filled the cockpit with fish.

The vertical-raise centreplate proved easy to use. When down, it is cleated in case of an inversion. I question the strength of the hold-down cleat. In my opinion it would not support the jolt of 72 kg centreplate suddenly trying to fall through the cabin roof. A locking bolt of adequate size and strength would be better and safer.

As we sailed back into the launching ramp — raising the centreplate by degrees according to depth — we regretted that time would not allow a full day afloat in this promising newcomer. In five minutes flat we had the headsail furled, mainsail down and stowed and the boat on the trailer, high and dry and dripping.

Yet another passer-by was there to ask questions. He wanted one too. Was impressed that a 5 m (16 ft 5 in.) boat could look so big and cost so little.

"That does include the sails, doesn't it?" he asked Dick Underwood.

"Yes," Dick said, quickly warming to the subject. "You won't find another trailer sailer with back stay, forestay, uppers and lowers and crossrees. All other boats available in this country have deck space that is unusable. This boat is ideal for fishing or just lazing in the sun with its flat raised deck and large cockpit.

"She is very safe with a ballast ratio of 30 percent. Buoyancy is a strong point..."

The passer-by didn't need convincing — he had decided to buy long before we returned to shore. But when a salesman/sailor has a product he truly believes in, he has a zeal for selling it. And that's what Dick Underwood is doing. Although his task is made so much easier by the fact that the TS500 is one hell of a good boat. *

