

# PORSCHE PEDIGREE

Like the legendary German sports car, the new Spyder is a refined, efficient throughbred... and it doesn't come cheaply. Test by MARK ROTHFIELD.

**T**O gain an insight into the new Super Spyder 24 it's worth considering the man behind it, Gunter Heuschner, one of those responsible, enigmatic characters who has popped up from time to time in yachting headlines during the past two decades.

As a youngster the paddler across the icy Baltic waters between Sweden and Finland on to successfully represent West Germany on the sport. In 1966 he turned to sailing, designing the yachts Southern 23 yacht, then the Western 26, Northern 28 and the Compass range: 28, 29 and 33.

Later Heuschner began building Farr 110s, one of which (Pico) won the ocean-torn 1977 Sydney to Hobart race, then the eminently successful IOR-inspired Farr 37 and 40. His crowning achievement came in 1984 when his own yacht, Italian

Pacific, won the 1984 Hobart race after sustaining a metre-long, 10cm-wide gash to the outer skin in a collision at the start, while two-thirds of the fleet was decimated by 40 knot headwinds persisting for 50 hours.

There have been 'downs' too that each time Heuschner has survived. From that encapsulated history you gain a picture of a man with tenacity, an eye for aesthetics and experience in boat building.

In many ways these traits are reflected in his latest baby, the Super Spyder. Aptly named after his favourite European sports car, it's a trailer sailor that blends performance, style and comfort... at an extravagant price.

A development of the pacy Spider 22 and 28, the Spyder 24 has proportionally more interior space yet is said to be faster downwind than both in light to moderate air. Upwind there's little difference, and only on reaches when the 28's longer waterline comes into play does the 24 lose out.

The hull design, computer aided using software from the Kookaburra 12m and Sternlager trimaran programs, has a fine ice entry with considerable early rocker and a long straight run aft for surfing. The bow knuckle is about 5cm above the waterline, which may detract slightly from windward kneeling ability but is said to improve control under the powerful masthead spinnaker — it also enhanced the Spider's appearance at rest.

It's built in tubular sandwich with 5-glass, providing great impact resistance, although Heuschner is considering using the more convenient Dorywell, with solid glass in areas subjected to trailer stress. Either way the construction would be light and stiff,

negating the need for extras such as keelbar. The hull and deck join is covered by a sturdy aluminium toe rail that can withstand bearing against wharves and so on.

The hardware moulding is bonded in one piece and dropped into place before the deck is bonded, a neat system that saves production time and improves integral strength but at an expensive tooling cost. Also, a leather-look fibreglass headliner is moulded into the deck for strength and aesthetics, again not cheap.

The moulds, in fact, cost about \$120,000 to build which partly explains the Spyder's staggering retail price of more than \$52,000 in such a small market, each boat has to bear more of the production costs. Heuschner had the first production boat, which we tested, built at the Gold Coast but has since started his own operation at Ballina, in northern NSW, where he can save on labour costs. My only criticism of the moulding concerned the non-skid deck surface that was slippery when wet and unattractive.

Down below it's nicely laid-out and appointed, not unlike the 28, with the main difference being the length of the seats. The saloon is quite spacious and airy, especially when the large pop-top is raised to give 2m of headroom, but it's a bit cramped in the ice section — a legacy of the fine entry and sweeping cabin line.

Wegged between the full-height centreboard case and a half bulkhead is a good-sized galley, starting a top-of-the-range Swedish-designed metho stove that is recessed and neatly covered by a cutting board when not in use. There's a small sink, plate rack and cutlery drawer, while an icebox is integrated into the step.

A table, which can be folded and stowed under a settee cushion, slots into the



46 Trailer Sailer



Peter Beames

Peter's little Spyder has a well under a square metre masthead spinnaker.