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Trailer Sailer

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ON BOARD THE SENSATIONAL SPYDER 24

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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.

TO gain an insight into the new Spyder, Spider 24, it's worth considering the man behind it, Gunter Hechtner, 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 he paddled across the icy Baltic waters between Sweden and Finland on to successfully represent West Germany in the sport. In 1966 he turned to sailing, designing the prore Southern 23 yacht, then the Western 26, Northern 28 and the Compass range, 28, 29 and 33.

Later Hechtner began building, first 110er, one of which (Prore) won the seven-year 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 rime hole. (Rime, wide, gash to the outer skin in a collision at the start, while two-thirds of the fleet was eliminated by 40 knot headwinds persisting for 80 hours.)

There have been 'downs' too that catch Gunter Hechtner's eye. From that circumscribed 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. Aply 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 it's 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 Kockabanza 12m and Smetlager trimaran programs, has a fine vee entry with considerable early rocker and a long straight run aft for surfing. The bow knuckle is about 8cm 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 balsa sandwich with 5-glass, providing great impact resistance, although Hechtner is considering using the more convenient Dorsivell, with solid glass in areas subjected to trailer stress. Either way, the construction would be light and stiff,

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

The furniture 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 masts, in fact, cost about \$120,000 to build which partly explains the Spider's staggering retail price of more than \$52,000 in such a small market, each boat has to bear more of the production costs. Hechtner had the first production boat, which we tested, built at the Gold Coast but has since started his own operation at Balina, 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 26, with the main difference being the length of the stoves. 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 vee section — a legacy of the fine entry and sweeping cabin line.

Wedged between the full-height centreboard case and a half-hullhead is a good-sized galley, starting a top-of-the-range Swedish-designed macto 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 stored under a settee cushion, slots into the



46 *Trainer Spider*



Peter Beattie

Peter Beattie's Spider handled well under a square metre masted spinnaker.

contoured seat and is supported by a swinging arm, covering the cabin into a discrete seating four. Deep, well-padded lounge chairs add to the seating comfort as well as being handy storage areas.

It can sleep four comfortably on single quarter berths and a double-see berth.



Not a stripped-out racer, but a four-seater for "slightly quicker" families.

Although a small child may squeeze onto the seatboard settee berth. Further forward there's a hanging locker, and a demarcated seat fits in front of the bulkhead to port. The carpet and cushion fabric is high quality which, along with the vinyl headliner, creates a luxurious effect. Obviously it's a concession to toys because such finishes would be quite out of place on a ballroom-sized racer.

Headracer design that it's a gung-ho boat, despite the stock toys, because to be such would be a kiss of financial death, given the current market conditions. "It's designed for the family who wants to go slightly quicker," he said. "Three people could manage it easily."

That's how many we had on board for our endurance test and in blustery conditions on Sydney's Pittwater — Quarter, Sydney Harbour Centre's Kelly Carls and your's truly. The boat was handled and rigging when we arrived, but we're told it takes

about 20 to 30 minutes to set up from scratch.

Certainly it shouldn't be too difficult. The boat's single axle trailer has a two-speed winch (with 10:1 maximum reduction) and ribs, allowing the wheel bearings to stay dry. It could be towed by a six-cylinder passenger car.

The Vm Pedigree mast is hinged to a base and swings up from aft with one person lifting and stowing while another watches on the job or her husband. Once erected, the forestay is attached to a 8:1 purchase system contained inside the large anchor well, giving drum-eight tension and also allowing adjustment to take white underway, although obviously tension would then be sacrificed.

The tapered section has twin sweep-back spreaders with the supports being exceptionally high to leave the masthead spinnaker, so there's no necessity of runners to control with, while a 2.5m internal sleeve at the base spreads load from the spinnaker pole and boom. The pole, incidentally, is stored on the boom when working with the topping lift and downhaul permanently connected, in a duffing fashion, and it simply has to be swung forward and clipped to the ring.

All halyards are lead to the rear of the coachhouse and are tensioned with Barent 8 swatches either side that double to sheet the kite.

Before raising the sails we motored out to the wind line, the Spider pushing about seven hours when the Manner 9 auxiliary was at full throttle. The outboard bracket system, the base of many trailer sailers, is worthy of mention here, with the unit swinging up inside the starboard cockpit seat and being almost fully covered by the hinged locker hatch — only the propeller shows, but it's well clear of the water.

It means the motor can be kept on board in position, covered and protected, great if you use the boat regularly but a bit risky if it's left unused for long periods. Lowering

the bracket was tricky because the rigger gets in the way — there's precious little storage during the process — but once down the starter cord, gear shift and throttle could be easily reached and the short-shaft prop leg was nice and deep.

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roasted with full battens, generated great power, but the short-foiled, self-tacking jib was a bit small for the broad reach we were on so Keryl wasted no time in setting the 37 Hkg in masthead spinnaker.

The first gust propelled us onto the plane in a matter of seconds, the transition being barely noticeable but for the wash of spray under the open transom, and the high-pitched whine of the vibrating rudder. The Spider remained totally controllable, tracking truly with light, positive helm touch.

Even when we became entangled with a yacht race and had to run precariously by the lee to clear them, the boat showed no sign of heaving. The race also proved a rough performance yardstick, given that it was a non-spinnaker event, with the 24-footer holding its own against the likes of Adams 10s that were running, goose-winged. We could see on the crew faces they were surprised and somewhat baffled to have this dwarf for company.

Finally we quelled the kite and jibed away, heading onto a two-ail reach in 15-20 knots that saw the Spider really mooning, responding like a dandy to a flick of the tiller. While it obviously performed better when sailed flat, the boat could handle considerable heel without rounding up or

losing rudder bite so the cruising sailor would not have too many worries.

On the beer home we favoured the radiator main with cunningham, outboard and sheet pressure and kept it retracted just enough to give a touch of weatherhelm, while the high-aspect battened jib provided most of the drive. The latter was sheeted from a curved track, equipped with a 4:1 purchase while another line positioned the traveller car to open or close the slot. An overhauling genoa can be used in light airs, sheeted traditionally on a slide snap the cabin.

The self-tacker seemed to work well, the boat sailing high and fast, but since it's just the most stable boat the skipper still has to keep his (or her) mind on the task. There's 80kg of internal ballast and the dagger keel contains 230kg, much of it in a built-downing 1.8m when lowered, and 48m when raised, via a hand-pumped hydraulic system. The cunningham are correctly angled to support the tender checks and the seats are wide. Sunbakers, however, are deprived of lashing room, with the cockpit being a little short and the stockbox and cabin roof cluttered. Also, there's not much room between the gunwales and cabin seats. It's the penalty, of course, for having a large interior.

Summary

The Super Spider 24 is an exceptional trailer sailor a thoroughbred, if you like, in terms of appearance, speed, handling, space and quality. No expense has been spared in its rigging and presentation, yet sadly the \$52,500 (plus freight) price tag is sure to be a major stumbling block, especially when you consider the 28 is around the same price. Even for the cruising market it's expensive, and that's a pity. **B**

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	7.30m
Beam	2.50m
Draft	1.80m
Sail rated	0.43m
Displacement	820kg
Ballast	310kg
Mast height	9.0m
Sail area	
man	22.22kg in
NO1 j2	8.20kg in
NO1 j3	37.44kg in

Designer: George Housmer
 Builder: Yacht Designers of Australia, (08) 87 8805.
 Test boat: Sydney Sailboat Centre, (02) 997 3077



Upwind, Spider stiffens at this angle, never wraps your tiller arm.