



CLUB MARINE

Vol. 29 No. 4



DECEPTIVE DEHLER 38

Cruiser with an edge

RRP \$10.95

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Distinctive downwind flyer

Winner of the 2014 European Yacht of the Year, Performance Cruiser category, the Dehler 38 is a savvy sports model that's also great for touring.

By Crosbie Lorimer

Antimacassar – even if you're not sure what it means, it's still one of those exotic words that is just plain fun to say. Antimacassars are the pieces of fabric found on aeroplane or train seat headrests, originating in the 19th century when it was fashionable for young men to plaster their hair with macassar oil.

A quirky historical side note perhaps, but not exactly something you'd associate with a modern cruiser racer, you'd think.

Well, the team at Dehler – now part of the ever-inventive Hanse Group – has an eye for unusual design features and has added a modern twist to this historic appendage, providing eye-catching antimacassar-style headrests to the main lounge seats in the very smart and crisp interior of the new Dehler 38.

And therein lies the challenge for today's production yacht designers. Such is the consistency, functionality and bang-for-buck output that you get from the great majority of production boatbuilders today, that each is pursuing an unending search for eye-catching and ingenious points of distinction for their latest offspring.

Not that the headrest details were by any means the only unusual feature on this yacht; there is ample evidence of clever thinking both above and below decks. But more of that later.

For this reviewer, who spent most of his sailing days racing stripped-out Grand Prix yachts, the opportunity to test Dehler's reputation for designing comfortable yachts that also hold their own on the race course was made the more inviting as we were testing the performance version of the D38 – sporting all-carbon spars, a longer keel, a performance rudder, North Sails 3Di sails and up-specced Harken winches and clutches, amongst other racing goodies.

Gratifyingly, I was not disappointed. In a very gusty winter south-westerly in bright sunshine on Pittwater, the boat was a delight to sail and helm as we put the D38 through her paces. The renowned Jefa steering gear gave a very light touch and it was not hard to find the groove as we headed upwind, even in the erratic conditions.

The Dehler 38 pointed well, too, consistently holding a 28- to 29-degree apparent wind angle upwind and tracking very comfortably at 7.7 knots (14.3km/h) boat speed in anything above 13 knots (24km/h) true wind speed. That boat speed lifted swiftly to nearly 8.5 knots (15.7km/h) as we eased



... there is ample evidence of clever thinking both above and below decks.



sheets and reached across the bay – speeds that should readily reach 9.5 knots (17.6km/h) under spinnaker according to the velocity prediction charts published by Dehler.

NEAT SET-UP

The cockpit is well set-up for racing with all halyards ducted to clutches at the companionway, with self-tailing winches for headsail and mainsail trimming lying easily to hand for crew and helmsman. The cruising version is specifically set up to allow two crew to sail the D38 with ease, while also offering an aft bathing platform.

Team Windcraft, the Australian importer for the Hanse Group yachts, does a good deal of its own custom fitout, before or after commissioning, to suit particular customer needs and preferences.

One such neat touch, evident in the cockpit of the boat we sailed, was the mainsail trimming from

the traveller recessed in the cockpit floor. The standard traveller adjustment cleats to the cockpit side bulkhead, but Windcraft has added a clam cleat at the base of the mainsheet attachment to the traveller, allowing the mainsail trimmer much more control when constantly trimming upwind.

There's real value for money in this performance version, too, as Team Windcraft's Managing Director Peter Hrones attested: "I was quite surprised at the price of the carbon spars; it was almost comparable to some aluminium rig packages," said Hrones. "Our rigger also said he was impressed by the accuracy of the fittings when he set up the mast and spars," added Hrones, referring to the all-carbon package supplied to Dehler by Pauger Carbon Composites, a Hungarian company that makes spars for race yachts. Its carbon-covered multiple purchase vang also looked very snappy.

VARIABLE INTERIOR

Below decks, the design is sophisticated and practical, with a teak finish and grey soft-furnishing option on this boat looking particularly good under the integrated LED lighting.

The galley layout offers all the basic requirements for a short cruise or offshore race, including double sink, top- and side-entry fridge, gimbaled stove, and ample drawer space.

The double fold-out lounge table features high fiddles and the usual wine bottle holder, and also a natty pull-out 'drinks cabinet' on its aft end. Storage is generous and readily accessible throughout, with Dehler sensibly offering pull-out drawers under lounge seats.

Antimacassars at the ready ... a curved theme is evident throughout the interior, including a bank of curved storage cabinets behind the lounge and galley.



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On the port side, a small navigation table can be converted to additional seating for the lounge table (and an extra berth) by sliding the table aft and relocating the cushion, allowing eight people to be seated at the lounge table.

And supporting those removable antimaccassars is another smart feature: a continuous bank of curved storage cabinets with gas strut hinged doors, sitting above and behind the lounge seats and galley.

Curved cabinets, bulkheads and rounded fiddles are features of this yacht that distinguish it from its more rectilinear cousins in the Hanse range, features that lose nothing in style and yet arguably offer more comfort and safety when below, particularly when underway.


Perhaps the smartest design element below is the two-way door that can either close off the shower and head from the adjoining washbasin area and main cabin or act as the door to the (optional) port aft cabin with the shower and head as an en suite.

The master cabin forward is comfortable and practical, if fairly basic in layout, while the location of the 315lt water tank under the berth frees up headroom in the main saloon, but precludes the usual storage here and would also raise some questions about optimal displacement.

The standard package offers one aft cabin on the starboard side and a large storage space accessible from the cockpit locker to port, with the option of a compact second aft cabin on the port side. That was a comfortable and light space

in the boat we sailed, if not exactly the 'bedroom' described in Dehler's brochure.

But then again, the marketing parlance in most yacht brochures these days dispenses with maritime terms such as galley, lounge and heads and, like Dehler, opts for the loft-apartment lingo of sofa, bathroom and pantry.

Strangely though, the D38 brochure modestly describes those unusual headrests as 'removable cushions'. Perhaps antimaccassar is just one step too exotic! 

SPECIFICATIONS: DEHLER 38

LOA:	11.3m
LWL:	10.4m
Beam (max):	3.75m
Draft:	2m standard/2.2m competition/1.6m shallow
Displacement:	7100kg standard/6750kg competition/7300kg shallow
Total sail area:	79.3sqm standard/86.5sqm competition
Mast height above waterline:	17.82m standard/18.55m competition
Cabins:	2 standard (with option for 3)
Berths:	4 standard (with option for 6)
Engine:	Volvo D130 20.3kW/27hp
Water:	300lt
Fuel tank:	160lt
Price as tested:	\$425,000
Price from:	\$340,000
Design:	Judel/Vroljik & Co. Interior: Dehler

For more information, contact: Team Windcraft, tel: (02) 9979 1709. Web: WindcraftDehler.com or: windcraft.com.au.

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