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DEHLER 46

A flagship that truly lives up to the performance-cruiser moniker by Zuzana Prochazka

Some scoff at the idea of a racer-cruiser or a performance-cruiser, saying the term is hopelessly nebulous. However, when you get on a boat like the Dehler 46, which points well, sails fast and also has plenty of well-apportioned accommodation space, what else can you call it?

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

Dehler is part of the Hanse Group and shares Hanse's design firm of Judel/Vrolijk, which is known for drawing slippery hulls. Immediately noticeable is the absence of any hard chine. Instead, the Dehler 46 has flare aft, but lacks the angular and boxy look of many of today's production boats.

Below the waterline, the Dehler 46 offers four keel configurations, including shoal (6ft 1in), moderate (7ft 4in) and deep (8ft 2in)—the latter two being T-shaped. For the West Coast, where there is water aplenty and kelp is common, a fourth option is both deep and L-shaped to help keep vegetation from getting trapped on the appendage. A large backing plate in the keel attachment spreads the loads beyond just the keel bolts.

Hull construction is comprised of a vacuum-infused cored laminate set in vinylester resin with an integrated

carbon-reinforced GRP grid. The grid adds stiffness while the carbon reduces weight. A watertight bulkhead is located just aft of a large sail locker forward. This includes some molded-in steps that make for a handy way to get down and inspect the chain in the anchor locker.

The fractional rig features a tapered, keel-stepped Seldén aluminium mast with double sweptback spreaders. Total working sail area is 1,228ft², spread between

a 106-percent genoa and a traditional mainsail. Full battens on the main and a hydraulic backstay allow you to tweak the sail shape to maximize speed. A self-tacking jib is also available, as is a competition rig that weighs 700lb less and flies around

The Details: The saloon features an efficient layout and exceptionally clean lines



150ft² of additional sail area from a Pauger carbon mast and boom supported by rod rigging.

ON DECK

The Dehler 46's sleek lines are enhanced by a pair of long, sloping side ports that increase the boat's perceived overall length. As a practical matter, the ports not only open outward, but have an extended exterior Lexan cover that both helps keep water out when the ports are open and creates a continuous "eyebrow" visible from the outside. All deck hatches are flush, and the cockpit coamings ramp down nicely to the deck as they run forward.

The jib tracks are well inboard, which keeps sheeting angles tight, and the chainplates are outboard with a cosmetic cover plate that allows access once removed. All the way forward, the deck is clear. An optional composite sprit is available if you want to fly an asymmetrical. Halyards and reefing lines all lead aft in under-deck conduits to Spinlock rope clutches and a pair of Lewmar winches on the cabintop.

The cockpit will work for either crewed racing or comfortable cruising. The Lewmar primaries are slightly elevated on the coamings, and there is a double-ended German mainsheet system. The traveler spans the cockpit sole just ahead of the twin wheels.

A drop-leaf table with a pop-up light is bolted on the centerline. It has a stainless steel handrail that slopes down to mimic the lines of the cabintop and eyebrow. It makes a great handhold, unless you slide your hand all the way forward where the gap narrows enough to pinch your fingers. With the table removed, there is plenty of room for a full crew to move about during a race, although this would be easier if there were full binnacles with handrails by the wheels, as there is not much to hang onto back there.

The transom drops down manually to form a swim platform. There is also a vertical transom-mounted handle and an emergency ladder that pulls out from a cubby, which may be useful in an MOB situation.

Dehler offers a number of packaged options for the boat. The Cruising Pack, for example, includes the cockpit table, bathing platform, spring cleats, Ultra anchor and a 320Ah battery upgrade to the house bank. The Navigation Pack includes a B&G Zeus2 multifunction plotter, H5000 instruments and an autopilot.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The layout options include two or three cabins and two heads. The master suite is forward with a centerline island berth and ensuite head with shower compartment. A full guest cabin is to starboard just aft of the L-shaped galley, with its Isotherm refrigeration and Eno stove. The port aft cabin can be either a double or a single with extra room for storage, which most couples will find handy, although it does not include access from the cockpit.

Three other notable features to be aware of belowdecks: first, everything is covered or hidden, including the instrument panel by the small forward-facing nav station to port and the pop-up bottle locker compartment in the saloon. All the lockers match with rounded tops and movable headrest cushions reminiscent of an airliner. It's a very clean look.

Second, the doors on each of the heads can either close off the entire head or close off just the toilet, leaving the sink and vanity accessible. This innovative dual-purpose door is head-smackingly simple and useful.

Finally, the finish is top notch throughout. Mahogany-colored joinery is standard. Teak and Italian oak are offered as well.

UNDER SAIL

Our sail trial in San Diego presented just the kind of conditions this boat is built for. Sailing in a sporty breeze ahead of an incoming storm, we saw 12 to 18 knots true windspeed, but decided not to reef the Elvström performance sails, just for the fun of it. (Dacron sails or higher-cost fancier fully laminated racing sails are also available.)

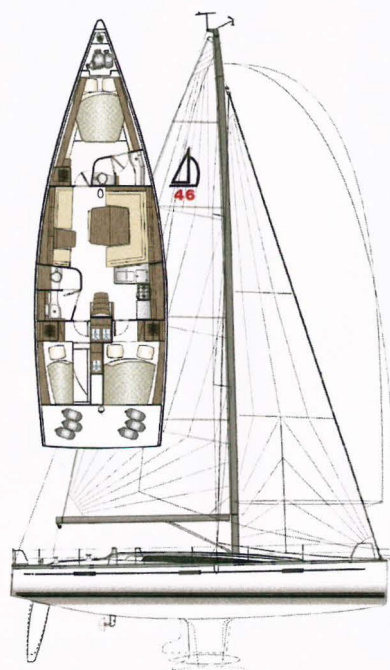
In the protected water of the bay we scooted along at 8.6 knots in 17 knots of breeze at a 45-degree apparent wind angle. Again, this boat likes to point, and we carried most of our speed right up to an apparent wind angle of about 38 degrees.

As the afternoon wore on, the wind became a bit fluky, but the boat still managed an impressive 7.9 knots of boat speed on a beam reach in 13 knots of wind, falling to 6 knots at a 120-degree AWA. With Jefa steering, the helm was light even with all that canvas up and drawing. The boat tracked well throughout.

UNDER POWER

Auxiliary power is provided by a 53hp Volvo Penta diesel with a saildrive transmission. (A larger 75hp engine is optional.) On flat

Specifications



LOA 47ft 3in **LWL** 42ft 5in **BEAM** 14ft 5in
DRAFT 6ft 1in (shoal); 7ft 4in (std); 8ft 2in (deep)
DISPLACEMENT 24,691lb
BALLAST 7,716lb
SAIL AREA 1,228ft² **AIR DRAFT** 69ft 7in (std rig)
FUEL/WATER (GAL) 58/119
ENGINE Volvo Penta 53hp with saildrive
BALLAST RATIO 31%
SA/D RATIO 23
D/L RATIO 145
DESIGNER Judel/Vrolijk
BUILDER Dehler/Hanse, Greifswald, Germany.
 dehler.com
US DISTRIBUTOR Hanse North & South America,
 Newburyport, MA 978-239-6568,
 dbrophy@hanseyachts.com
PRICE \$420,000 (sailaway)

water with 12 knots of breeze behind us and five people aboard, we managed 8.4 knots at 2,500 rpm with the standard engine spinning a Flexofold three-bladed folding propeller. With the throttle wide-open at 2,950 rpm, we eked out 8.7 knots. Tankage is more than adequate for coastal cruising with 119 gallons of water and 58 gallons of fuel.

CONCLUSION

The Dehler 46 is as close as you can get to having a viable mix of performance and comfort without really compromising either. With its fully-featured interior, this is a boat that can be enjoyed by the whole family. And when it's time to club race or just get going: oh, what fun it is to ride! ♦

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