

PERFORMANCE

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BOAT
OF THE
MONTH



Ker-designed Bolt 37

A grand-prix racer without the giant price tag was Jason Ker's goal with his new Bolt 37. Has he succeeded? Matthew Sheahan investigates

Setting out the thinking behind one of his latest creations, the new Bolt 37, designer Jason Ker explains: "The typical customer that we envisaged when we first drew up plans for the Bolt 37 was one whose last boat had been a 40ft production cruiser-racer.

"Over the years they would have become hooked on racing, improving with each season and, despite early intentions for the odd cruise, the boat was only ever raced. As a result, what they are looking for now is a simple, functional raceboat with the style and characteristics of modern grand-prix racers, but without a giant price tag."

That original design concept is about to

become a reality as the first of three Bolt 37s is shortly to be launched in Turkey. She is aimed at the ORCi handicap system, which is not only a popular system throughout mainland Europe, but Ker believes offers better prospects for a sub-40ft mainstream grand-prix style racer in a broad-based handicap fleet.

Keeping costs down

"The rule is based more on the anticipated performance of the boat rather than a set of fixed parameters," he says, "which helps to keep the costs down as you don't have this big drive towards keeping the boat light while trying to lower the centre of gravity,

"We have a full-on raceboat with Hall Spars carbon rig for just €169,000"

which can often be an expensive route. The result is that we have a full-on raceboat with a Hall Spars carbon rig for €169,000 ex factory, sails and electronics."

The price tag is indeed impressive for a flush-decked no-nonsense sub-40ft racer. There is also little else to choose from in this size and style; the closest grand-prix racers are 4ft longer overall yet have price tags more than double that of the Bolt 37.

One of the big savings in cost has been to use an infused vinyl ester resin and E-Glass Corecell M-Foam laminate in a vacuum-bagged layup for the hull and deck, which means they can bond to a gelcoat finish rather than paint.

"We've gone for a simple style with plumb ends, a fixed bowsprit and flush deck, which while in keeping with modern grand-prix style, also helps to keep costs down," says Ker.

Indeed, her looks are those of a modern racer with a wide, open and shallow racing cockpit, tiller steering and an offset



- 1 Fixed bowsprit
- 2 Offset foredeck hatch could be set up for string drop systems, although not fitted as standard
- 3 Genoa car puller systems for non-overlapping headsail mounted on transverse tracks
- 4 Main pit winch set to starboard, optimised for port weather mark roundings
- 5 Primary winches
- 6 Mainsheet winch
- 7 Square-top mainsail requires twin topmast backstays
- 8 Flared aft sections and narrow waterline beam



companionway to make space for the starboard secondary winch and clutches. She has all the normal race controls, with twin topmast backstays, under-deck kicker led back to the mainsheet trimmer and genoa car fairlead controls for both vertical and horizontal adjustment. Yet in areas such as the square-sided cockpit she remains simple wherever possible, making savings without compromising performance.

Good for ORCi

A glance at her principal dimensions – in particular, her displacement at 4,200kg – reveals a boat that falls between two rating systems, but that slots in well for ORCi. This is no accident.

Under HPR (High Performance Rule), which is focused on the high-performance lightweight typeform, this 36-footer is a similar weight to boats of 40ft LOA in this class and therefore too heavy to be truly competitive. To be in with a chance under HPR at 36ft Ker estimates that she would

With her high performance and a full race layout, is the Bolt 37 what the mainstream racing market in Europe has been waiting for?

need to be around 1,000kg lighter and that would mean a far more expensive boat.

Under IRC she should be able to carry her weight better, but here her size and style drops her into a tricky size category that many racing designers have been finding hard to crack. While she is capable of being raced under IRC, Ker concedes that under her current configuration stronger-airs performance could be more tricky, especially with her ample sail plan.

ORCi racing, on the other hand, appears to offer some middle ground for this size of boat. As a result she has been designed with the mainland European market in mind, with a 3.5m maximum beam and a removable keel, which will help make her an easier boat to trail to some of the bigger events.

Could this be the beginning of a new breed of affordable grand-prix racers? The Bolt's price tag and style are certainly two factors in her favour, but as always it will be her showing on the racecourse that will hold the key to success.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	11.0m	36ft 0in
Beam	3.48m	11ft 5in
Draught	2.8m	9ft 2in
Displ	4,200kg	9,258lb
Keel	2,100kg	4,629lb (1,850kg in bulb)
Main	46m ²	495ft ²
Jib	35m ²	377ft ²
Gennaker	147m ²	1,582ft ²

ORC category: 1

P	15.60
I	15.11
J	4.34
E	4.85
SPL	5.90

Marketed by: KA Yachting
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