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WILD RIDE

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ON THE WATER

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THEIR CUSTOMISED HANSE 505



AUCKLAND AHOY

THE VOLVO OCEAN
RACE STOPOVER

FAR EAST 28R

The Far East 28R is a sporty one-design or fleet training yacht that proved itself well when I raced it as part of the 16-boat OD in the China Cup.

Far East Boats is steadily growing a range of cruising and performance yachts as they continue to capitalise on their modest beginnings as Optimist suppliers to the Beijing Olympics. The Singapore yard is the world's largest producer of these dinghies with an annual output of 1,200 boats, some of which go to Australia; where it currently is searching for a dealer for the entire range. The range of Far East designs has also grown in size during the ensuing years so apart from its dinghies and small catamarans there are the 26, 28R, 31R and the flagship 35. The company's first attempt at a one-design fleet was its 26 cruiser which I skippered during a previous China Cup and found reasonable but lacking in several areas.

Moving forward to 2014, with the aid of global marketers, the company has produced the European designed 28R race boat. It's a yacht that can be used for competitive one-design racing yet is simple enough for sailing schools to train aspiring performance sailors or indeed for anyone to enjoy a blast on inshore waters with, so is a fairly good market proposition in my mind. It joins seasoned competitors such as the J/109 and the elegant Soto 27 that have proven themselves but are showing signs of ageing.

Racing them as part of one-design fleet in the China Cup gave me a good insight into their capabilities and these 29-footers proved competent and easy to sail.

Racing against me in the 16-boat fleet was the designer Maarten Voogd who I caught up with afterwards for a chat. "My brief was to create a modern high-speed racer that would be infusion built and light enough to be trailerable," explained the Dutchman as we looked over the boat. Construction is a good standard, with the deck/hull join bolted and glued together and the build conforms to ISO standards, something Voogd had to have for the European market where he sees big opportunities.

The 29-foot hull has a reverse angle bow a-la-Volvo 65 as a signature feature which means it very much looks the part of a modern racer, something that should encourage teenagers to take it for a spin. The trailerable aspect is achieved by a lifting keel that allows the lead T-bulb to slide up to the hull – and during the three races that I used the boat for, there were no shudders or lack of rigidity felt from it. The other foil is the transom mounted rudder, an exact replica of the one used on the 26, which was oversized for that boat but felt totally fine on the 28R. Also on the transom is a 3.5 horsepower outboard which didn't disturb us when racing but will be removed to a fixing on the mast compression post in the cabin – which centres the weight and clears the transom.

The wide cockpit sole is supported by longitudinal mouldings for the steerer but none for the mainsheet trimmer that sits in the centre of the cockpit – something that may be added I'm told. Rounded coamings along the gunwales and angled bulkheads at their base gives good ergonomics to the 28R's cockpit. Other pluses include the wide mainsheet track which allows good control of the mainsail and two-speed Harken primary winches lie just ahead for the jib with another winch on the cabin top for halyards. Other important control lines are for the retractable bowsprit and the backstay pulley system which tensions the tapered alloy Selden mast. Outboard wire shrouds on chain plates hold the rig up, plus twin backstays. The first batch of these boats has been fitted with the company's own Far East Dacron sails, which may be changed for the final OD rules. Below decks is bare and used for kite hoists, apart from some storage pouches. www.fareastboats.com

SLOVENIAN BEAUTY

The Far East 28R has a simple asymmetric sailplan and good cockpit ergonomics.



MODEL	Far East 28R
DESIGNER	Maarten Voogd
LOA	8.95 m 29 ft
LWL	-
BEAM	2.75 m
DRAFT	1.73 m
ENGINE	3.5 HP Tohatsu Outboard
WATER	n/a
FUEL	n/a
SAIL AREA Upwind: 44m ² Downwind: 115m ²	
DISPLACEMENT	1,200kg
BALLAST	TBC
PRICE	US\$38,000 ex-factory China and ex-VAT