

RIGHT: The Sun Fast 3200 is set up for double or single-handed sailing.

BELOW: Under spinnaker the Sun Fast 3200 came alive, while remaining manageable. A large asymmetric gennaker can be flown from the fixed bowsprit.

BELOW RIGHT: Nicely distributed hull volume and pleasing deck line.



ANDI ROBERTSON PICTURES

Offshore adventurer

JEANNEAU'S LATEST RACER COMBINES SHORT-HANDED PRACTICALITY WITH IRC SENSIBILITY, BY ANDI ROBERTSON

GIANTS SUCH AS Jeanneau and Beneteau have long since learned not to dabble in the niche markets, to make short to medium sized runs of race type boats. Periodically in Europe Jeanneau has answered domestic demand for a monotype race boat for the single-handed Tour de France a la Voile, with the Jeanneau Selection and then the JOD 35 one-design.

Both were successful in France and in pockets of Europe, but neither were particularly CHS or IRC friendly, which is part of the reason the JOD 35 in particular never took off in any great numbers elsewhere.

But with its offshore heritage, simplicity of construction and maintenance and excellent value for money, the JOD 35 is quite highly sought after in Europe, especially for short-

handed racing. A simple water ballast conversion makes it a very acceptable, functional offshore racer for those who want to race solo and two-handed.

There is no doubt there is a cultural shift in northern hemisphere sailing circles, and a growing population who want to go back and take on the wider challenges of offshore racing, especially short-handed. Driven or inspired by the likes of the Figaro Race — in successive Beneteau Figaro 1 and version IIs —, and the Mini circuit, or the Transat Jacques Vabre, the Vendee Globe, the Transat, and even the Calais Round Britain race, there is a growing appetite from a certain cross-section of the sail racing community for a new challenge.

In France there is a generation of mature sailors, now owners who perhaps did the Tour Voile in their youth and remember with

fondness the challenge and the camaraderie. Now they want to revisit some of that, or perhaps get a bite-sized chunk of what it is like to race short-handed on the Figaro Circuit.

That is pretty much what the Transquadra answers. A French Transat race for amateurs over 40 years of age who want to race solo or two-handed, the entries have grown with each of the five editions and the 2008 race started with more than 100 boats, including over 15 Jeanneau Sun Fast 32s. The course goes in discrete stages from St Nazaire to Madeira and then across the Atlantic to Martinique. It is only open to series production boats, raced solo or two-handed.

What's not to like about that? The race is set up for owners/crews who cannot take more than a few weeks holiday at a time and the route and timing is not exactly unpleasant.



Jeanneau is proud of its ability to maintain a very tight tolerance on weight.

Innovative class rules

A class association is already active. One of the principal desires is to keep racing weights close. They are calling it an 'isotype', but basically racing under class rules is based on an IRC TCC, so boats must have a valid IRC certificate. Boats will weigh between 3420-3500kgs and Jeanneau is proud of its ability to maintain a very tight tolerance on weight, plus or minus 40kgs thanks to its carefully controlled resin infusion process.

The ISO concept is delivered by making all-up weight aligned to mainsail area. Thus the lightest empty IRC measured weight hulls will have the smallest roach on the main, and the heaviest will have the largest.

There is a standard inventory of supplied equipment which must be carried under class rules. Boats come with a certified weight compliance certificate by Jeanneau.

The appendages are carefully controlled. The standard rudders are polyester or vinylester resin fibreglass, and the keel is a

That is probably the focus group that the Sun Fast targets. But Daniel Andrieu had an eye on IRC when he designed the boat, and so as well as being the ideal vehicle for short-handed races a few times a year, it will race competitively on the domestic scene as well as cruise efficiently and at good speed.

European Yacht of the Year

Since it was launched last year the Sun Fast 3200 has sold over 50 units, including one due to land in Sydney in January, and the order book, despite the economic downturn, is still

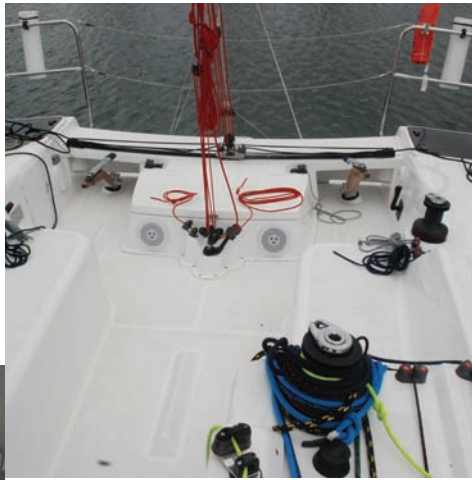
very healthy. There were some initial production problems which perhaps did not inspire worldwide dealers to give their wholesale buy in to a product which was seen as having a discrete target market, and some have waited to see how the boat goes under IRC, but the blue touch paper has been lit and the Sun Fast 3200 is European Yacht of the Year.

The appeal is a multi purpose race boat which will cruise, which will race under IRC, but which has the overriding ability to be sailed short-handed at speed on long passage and offshore races.

BELOW: Twin rudders deliver a little more traction when pressed.

RIGHT: Cockpit layout is very different, with symmetrical helm positions either side of the large, central liferaft cover with deck speakers.

FAR RIGHT: The keel is a simple L-shaped iron fin with a lead bulb.



The short tiller does take a little getting used to.



simple L-shaped iron fin with a lead bulb.

Otherwise the class rules err on the side of simplicity of sail handling with standard genoa and spinnaker dimensions. Under class rules only one Group 3 sailor under ISAF Classification is permitted on each boat, unless the boat is being sailed single or double-handed.

Hydraulics are prohibited, other than autopilots, and there can be no titanium, no carbon sail battens, no strain gauges.

Subtle blend

The hull is infusion injected over a balsa core, while the deck is infusion moulded foam cored, as is the mast supporting bulkhead and the substantial forward watertight bulkhead.

The aluminium 19/20ths fractional rig offers the next best thing to a full hoist kite and is pretty easily tuned. The shroud base is wide with substantial, long swept-back spreaders permitted by the 105 per cent overlapping jib. Standing rigging is stainless Dyform.

The hull shape is interesting and a subtle blend of what you would consider a fairly standard, IRC style, modern cruiser/racer with more pronounced, slightly squat and powerful stern sections – much more Classe 40 or IMOCA influenced, but generally the beam is carried well aft.

The plumb bow and rounded, slightly proud forefoot is sweet and conventional, the hull volume nicely distributed with quite a

pleasing deck line. Overall it is quite a good looking boat, particularly under sail. Indeed, the more you sail the Sun Fast 3200 and the more you see them around, the more appealing this boat becomes.

The cockpit layout is very different and it takes a little bit of getting used to. Twin rudders mean twin short tillers, and there are effectively two symmetrical helm positions either side of the large, central liferaft cover which is partially open at the back.

The main traveller runs across the transverse stern beam and is controlled by the helmsman. The mainsheet is also at the helm's foot and the split cascade-style backstay controls are double-ended so they too fall to hand for the helm.

So far, so good for the short-handed sailing, though it does rather confine the mainsheet hand in crewed racing.

Otherwise the deck layout is relatively conventional, apart from the primaries being well back in the cockpit to facilitate short-handed sailing. On either corner there are big hatch locker covers which allow access to the twin steering quadrants. You certainly want to keep these corners weight free anyway.

Genuine performer

Our sail on a rather grey and moody Southampton Water on the English south coast was a short one, yet it completely shattered my preconceptions of a boat I thought would be two-thirds concept and one-third pragmatic. Instead it was pretty much instantly likeable, certainly fun and definitely easy to sail.

The abiding desire at the end was to chuck the crew off, go sail somewhere solo for a few days and experience a new challenge.

We had 9-14 knots of true wind speed for the couple of hours we sailed and the Sun

Fast 3200 proved a genuine performer. There was controllable power on tap from the generous main and it was easy to settle into a groove and play the traveller occasionally.

Upwind the boat seemed pretty stiff, although not overly so; it would happily sit powered up on its ear and keep tracking okay after some early attention to the rudder. The twin rudder concept does deliver that little extra traction, though reaching when over-pressed with the kite up we did see a couple of broaches.

Upwind the speed was surprisingly good. We made 6.2 to 6.4kts without getting excited or anyone hiking really. Tacking through about 70-72 degrees, the boat accelerated cleanly, liking to be driven a little free for a second and allowing a decent speed build out of the tack.

The short tiller does take a little getting used to, and while the helm is not overly light it does discourage sawing holes in the water, instead letting the powerful hull do the job, building speed and then gaining height. The foils are generous enough in terms of area and section, allowing a relatively comfortable but well defined groove, especially important when racing long short-handed offshore courses.

Under spinnaker the Sun Fast 3200 comes alive, and while it is not over-excitable it is actually quite manageable. We sailed with the standard symmetrical kite and the boat was impressively speedy and generally quite easy to handle.

There is a large asymmetric gennaker which flies off the stubby, fixed sprit which we rather missed, but we still were very impressed with the way the 3200 held her sail area and handled. We were making 11kts plus in the puffs, though the boat does like to be pressed down as the gusts arrive to not only maximise the lift, but maintain maximum control.



ABOVE: Close to a masthead rig, with wide shroud base allowed by the 105 per cent overlapping jib.

RIGHT: Saloon is clean and functional; the two seats/berths have semi-rounded back supports.

Below decks

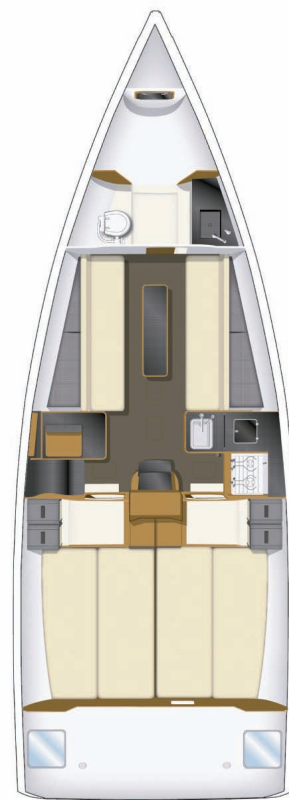
Downstairs the 3200 is quite comfortable in a very clean and functional way. There are two longitudinal saloon seats/berths with semi-rounded back supports. Aft there is a good, fully functioning galley, typical of a modern cruiser rather than a race boat, as is the nav station opposite.

Thanks to the generous stern sections there are two good-sized aft cabins with big double berths. The cabins are fully headlined and there are soft pack, integral lockers in sail cloth, providing a little hanging locker and stowage bags on the hull side of each cabin.



How practical they prove remains to be seen.

Overall the Sun Fast 3200 is a great package which will sell on use and function before IRC competitiveness. For those who harbour desires to race, or indeed cruise short-handed at life affirming speeds, the Sun Fast 3200 is a great boat. Conceptually it is an absolute step towards popularising adventurous offshore racing. Excellent. 🏆



Specifications

Length	10.10m
Waterline length	8.55m
Beam	3.48m
Draft	1.90m
Displacement	3400kg
Ballast	1300kg
Sail area Mainsail	33.50sq m
Genoa	28.50sq m
Spinnaker	83.00sq m
Construction	GRP/balsa core hull using resin infusion system, structural inner moulding glued in place, GRP/foam core deck (infusion). Mixed lead/cast iron keel with epoxy surface treatment, twin polyester rudders and stainless steel rudder stocks with self-aligning bearings.
Rig	Aluminium spars, keel-stepped mast, twin swept-back spreaders, Dyform standing rigging.
Engine	15hp Yanmar 2YM15 diesel saildrive
Price	From \$226,085 delivered and antifouled, or around \$245,000 with basic sails, safety and instruments.
Capacities Freshwater	80lt
Fuel	75lt
Designers	Andrieu Yacht Design
Builder	Jeanneau, Les-Herbiers, France www.jeanneau.com
Australian distributor	Euroyachts, Brisbane, Qld. For dealer information, tel: (07) 3369 8888, or visit www.euroyachts.com.au