

PANACHE AND *performance*

THE JEANNEAU SUN ODYSSEY 36i PERFORMANCE CRUISER/RACER HAS ARRIVED AND WITH CHARACTERISTIC FRENCH FLAIR HAS BEEN SCORING FULL MARKS IN THE LOOKS DEPARTMENT AND ALSO WHERE IT COUNTS OUT ON THE COURSE

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Seducing ardent admirers with its style and speed through the water, the Sun Odyssey 36i is a surprisingly racy package that is set to change the impression of Jeanneau in the yacht-racing scene.

Offshore Yachting hopped onboard Jeanneau's brand new 'baby' cruiser/racer at the CYCA, currently competing in the club's Audi Winter Series. Storm clouds laden with a potential torrent encircled Sydney Harbour, and I truly thought that I would be propping up the club bar rather than test sailing the gleaming new 36i, aptly named *Sports Bar*. But Huey was smiling on us and during the harbour sail to put this lively Gallic thoroughbred through its paces, not a single drop hit the decks as a window of blue followed us, tack by tack. Divine intervention? Perhaps not, but it does wonders for enjoying a

morning sail if you can hang up the wet weather gear. Ron Jacobs of Sydney-based Performance Boating, the local Jeanneau agents, will be looking to those blue skies as a good omen for this simple-to-sail, surprisingly quick and well-rounded balance between a cruising and a club racing yacht.

French production yachts hold a huge market share of new yacht sales on a global basis. Their fresh, contemporary designs, chic interiors, and quality European build standards have been attracting yachtsmen from around the world for some decades now. Where the French have really made their mark is in well-appointed cruising yachts, and catamarans, more so than their racing brothers. The percentage of French yachts dedicated to racing, whether around the buoys on a harbour or lake, or facing the offshore swells, has been a very





small relative number. Despite the clear separation between cruising and racing versions by some French yacht-builders, the price differential and racing options list has tended to discourage rather than motivate people to choose speed over comfort.

The new Sun Odyssey 36i (the 'i' is for injection-moulded) in its 'Performance' variant is a very capable cruiser/racer for yachtsmen seeking a good turn of speed and lively performance, without sacrificing any of the creature comforts below deck. They first arrived on Australian shores in May last year and 15 have been delivered to date, though only five of those are 'Performance' versions.

Although Jeanneau also offer the 36i in a standard cruising configuration, the 'Performance' version is the one to pick if you're considering competitive sailing with your local club, or perhaps taking on the fleets at Airlie Beach, Hamilton Island, Port Stephens, or Geelong.

It is a 'big little boat' for 36 feet with a hull designed by well-known French naval architect Marc Lombard. Carrying the proportionally wide beam of 3.59 metres a very long way aft, in plan form the 36i is shaped as a bullet with virtually no taper in the fat stern section and transom. This great downwind platform provides good buoyancy at sea and gives the yacht impressive reaching and running performance with an SOG of over eight knots achievable in light to medium airs. The wide beam also allows for a very large, comfortable and uncluttered cockpit area that can easily accommodate six to eight, and twin double cabins below decks if required. In more cruising yacht fashion, the traveller and mainsheet are mounted on the cabin roof below the relatively short boom, and while not having the wide traveller run of a typical 'racing' setup on the cockpit floor, it is quite adequate and easily trimmed with all halyards and lines leading to jammers on the cabin roof in a well-labelled, easy setup.

Upwind, the 36i pointed very well despite its beam, due in part to the racing rig adjustments by Performance Boating to close haul the jib sheets to improve sail angle. Acceleration with only the #2 furling headsail was strong and boat speed was regularly above six knots in no more than eight to nine knots of breeze, touching over seven quite regularly as pressure improved with lifts.

The performance version of the 36i differs from its cruising stable-mate in a number of areas, albeit on the same hull and the comfortable and spacious interior for a 36-footer, or 10.69-metre hull length, to be both metric and precise.

The yacht makes the most of its length with a 9.84-metre waterline, thanks to a near plumb bow and stern maximising wetted surface.

The keel of the Performance variant is 2.10 metres, whilst the standard yacht is 1.94 metres, providing improved righting moment, superior performance upwind and a stability curve more than sufficient to see the yacht safely race to Hobart or north to the Whitsundays without an issue.

The Seldon two-spreader mast is also taller at 14.08 metres (compared to the standard 13.75 metres) and includes a spinnaker pole track. The standard sail area is around eight per cent more with 69 square metres versus 63.7 square metres for the cruising yacht. The performance model can also be fitted with a larger masthead spinnaker of 98 square metres. This version also comes factory fitted with spinnaker deck hardware. The rig is Dyform standing rigging with an adjustable 12:1 backstay tackle system to fine-tune the sail shape when working upwind. The performance boat also has the option of a larger wheel, which in practice is a necessity with the wide beam of the yacht, particularly if racing short-handed.

Standard sails specified for on the 36i Performance are Mylar Taffeta Quantum tri-radials with a furling Genoa and semi-full battened mainsail but still with lazybag and lazyjacks to make hoisting and dropping sails a snack. There's nothing quite like it after an evening twilight race! When



Photo: ACE Marine Photography

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sails are dropped, it's a quick cruise back indeed with the small 29 hp Yanmar (with folding prop on the performance boat) able to get you back to the marina at a good eight knots when pushed. This in itself is a demonstration of the efficiency of this 5,700-kilogram hull.

As for all yachts with aspirations to race well, the Sun Odyssey 36i needs

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to rate well under handicapping. A TCC of 1.012 under IRC for a current racing performance version of the yacht demonstrates its competitiveness, given a good skipper and crew aboard.

Racing aside, this 'big little boat' is as impressive downstairs, with a large double berth forward of a very spacious saloon for a 36-footer, and then a choice of either twin double cabins aft, with small head, or a single larger double cabin aft, with a huge storage area and larger head with shower stall to port. There's up to two metres of headroom, lots of light from the many windows including a large one inset in the hull, and a luxurious ambience to the fit-out. Although not a large cruising yacht, there is more than enough room for a cruising couple or two, to be very comfortable when cruising in the slow lane, rather than racing around the cans. And speaking of cans, this 36-footer has one of the biggest fridges you are likely to come across, so whether for the business of yacht racing or pleasure, this new French offering seems to offer the best of both worlds – and at a price to suit our more temperate times.

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS



10.94m	LOA
10.69m	HULL LENGTH
9.84m	LWL
3.59m	BEAM
5,700kg	DISPLACEMENT (LIGHT LOAD)
2.10m	DRAFT
1546kg	KEEL WEIGHT
A8/B10/C12	CE CATEGORY
31 sq.m.	MAINSAIL
38 sq.m.	GENOA
98 sq.m.	SPINNAKER (OPTIONAL)
\$254,000	PRICE FROM