

Jeanneau 50 deck saloon

Your ship's come in...

Are you looking for something that can take you up to the Whitsundays and still race around the cans in a respectable time. In this article, AY Editor, Barry Henson, looks at one of the boats that should be on your wish list, the Jeanneau 50 DS Performance.

TO UNDERSTAND THIS BOAT you need to understand the two of the most significant developments in boat building over the past twenty years.

The first development was the arrival of the baby boomers. From a purely financial viewpoint, the late 80's and 90's were the 'boom times'. Baby boomers arrived at the beginning of, some say even brought on, a financial boom on an unprecedented scale. Stocks skyrocketed. Internet fortunes were made. IPOs and start-ups entered our lexicon, and an entire generation did pretty bloody well by most standards.

Around the same time, the size of sail boats began increasing. In 1980 the average yacht was around 35 feet, or a tad over 10 metres, LOA. Along came a host of boat handling improvements: roller furling, lazy jacks, powered anchor winches, in-mast and in-boom furling and electric winches. Suddenly, it became physically possible for a couple to handle a 12 or even 15 metre boat.

Then came the arrival of the perfect storm-cashed-up and retiring baby boomers started buying boats, and they wanted bigger and bigger boats. Suddenly, every boat builder was up sizing and the average boat grew from 10 metres to 12-15 metres LOA.

With that background it was with some anticipation that I recently tested the Jeanneau 50 DS Performance, a 15.07 metre deck saloon that exemplifies the type of boat the perfect storm created.

You have to love the French

MAIN IMAGE:
This is the dream: a gorgeous anchorage, a top notch boat and a beautiful partner to share it with.

Looking at the 50 DS brochure you have to hand it to the French. With destinations like New Caledonia, Martinique and French Polynesia, the French do a great job of selling 'ze dream'. One of the things you can't help but notice in the brochure are the shots of some bloke having a great time sailing while his gorgeous companion, possibly a second wife or knowing the French, a mistress, lounges alluringly in her bikini doing nothing more strenuous than working on her tan and sipping champagne. Jeanneau's marketing department has obviously done their homework on what men



performance



"The performance version...gives you a deeper keel, more sail area and...rigging changes all designed to give you more 'get up and go'."



dream about and, just as importantly, how to sell it to their partners.

First impressions

The Jeanneau 50 DS's performance hull was designed by Philippe Briande, who has designed numerous America's Cup yachts, and her distinctive styling came from the Garroni Design Group. One feature that immediately stands out is the styling of the deck saloon with its elongated curved windows on either side that remind me of the eyes of a serpent. Some deck saloons look like boxes, not this; the 50 DS has a sleek look that is very attractive.

The design brief

Jeanneau have two 50 DS models: the standard deck saloon and the perfor-

mance version of the boat. The performance version, which I tested, gives you a deeper keel, more sail area and a few rigging changes—all designed to give you that extra get up and go. This boat was designed as a "...a cruising boat for baby boomers who also want to do the occasional race". Let's see how it stacks up.

From stern to stem

The 50 DS has a wide sugar scoop stern with a drop down swim ladder and fresh water shower (hot & cold). The stern also incorporates a small life raft garage that provides a convenient, safe place to store the raft, and it's well located should you ever need to launch it.

The stern of the 50 DS has two in built helmsman seats, one for each wheel. Under each seat is a deep lazarette for stor-

"The...performance hull was designed by Philippe Briande, who has designed numerous America's Cup yachts."



ing your outboard and the multitude of things you need to go cruising. To starboard is an outboard gas locker with room for two tanks. Jeanneau also offer an optional gas barbecue at the stern that is plumbed to the gas system.

There are port and starboard helming stations, each with Raymarine E70 instrumentation. On the boat I tested the port station, which was the master station, also had the engine controls, autopilot, anchor winch and bow thruster controls. In between the two stations at the aft end of the cockpit table was a swiveling Raymarine E120 chart plotter that serviced both helms.

There are curved cockpit wells that allow the helmsman to brace their legs when the boat heels. I found them a bit narrow for my liking. In lighter winds you would no doubt be

sitting up on the cockpit coaming.

The primary winches are just forward and outboard of the wheel within easy reach of both the helmsman and cockpit crew. These are Harken 60's, nicely sized to handle the genoa or spinnaker sheets.

The lines run under deck from the mast to the cockpit, which allows Jeanneau to put the traveler on the cabin top, thus keeping the cockpit clear of obstructions. The lines run through Harken jammers to the secondary winches, which are Harken 48's. They handle the halyards, the traveler and the main and genoa reefing lines. On the boat I tested the port winch was motorised, which made raising the main and reefing the genoa child's play.

The cockpit is spacious and well designed, ideal for entertaining with a large teak cockpit table, and the side seats are long enough to allow you to stretch out for al fresco sleeping in the tropics. There is another good sized lazarette to port.

There are strong points for attaching your harness as you come up the companionway, at various points in the cockpit and at the helming stations. Jeanneau are obviously intending this boat to be taken offshore.

Moving forward

The standard Jeanneau 50 DS in Europe has teak decks. Tipping its hat to Australian conditions, Australian boats have been imported with non-skid side decks instead of teak to reduce maintenance and heat gain. Jeanneau do use teak on the seats with teak available on the cockpit floor as an option.

I found exiting the cockpit a bit awkward. The height of the deck saloon makes one step a bit too long. Jeanneau have addressed this by incorporating a narrow step into the outside of the coaming, but neither is a perfect solution.

Moving forward the standard rig is a SparCraft swept-back double spreader rig with an in-mast furler. The performance version comes with a taller stick, spinnaker, pole and fittings, lazy jacks and performance sails in lieu of the in-mast furler. The sail area on the performance version has been increased by 21 sqm. Both version use a rod vang.

Jeanneau has given the 50 DS an enormous bow locker. This is one of those features that touches the heart of every true sailor. Ah, a room for my sails! No more wet sails below. This locker, which has a climb down ladder, has enough space for all of your sails plus some. You can also use the up-



rights of the ladder for organising your sheets, docking lines and fenders.

The bow locker has a Lewmar anchor winch, a switchable salt and fresh water wash down and plenty of room for chain and rode. In a bit of a departure for normal practice, Jeanneau don't include a standard anchoring package in the base price. They leave it up to each owner to purchase their own anchor and chain. It's unusual, but I can also see the merit in it as cruising sailors tend to have strong views about what constitutes a decent anchor and chain, so Jeanneau have taken the view that it's best to let them organise what they want.

At the pointy end Jeanneau has equipped the boat with two heavy duty bow rollers, a very nice touch, and a Facnor roller furler with two sail tracks on the extrusion.

So what's it like below?

As you step down the companionway you're immediately struck by a feeling of space. Jeanneau's designers have done a fantastic job of giving the boat a light, open feel, yet ensuring that it meets the needs of a cruiser. For example, Jeanneau has moved away from woodwork on the walls in favour of a light liner. They've also pushed the side walls back to the hull just above the side cabinets. The effect is a light, airy wide open feeling that is very attractive. In practical terms these changes don't give you more usable space below, but in comparison to other 50 footers this boat feels very spacious.

MAIN IMAGE: The Jeanneau 50 DS has a slippery hull with a lot of initial stability, which gives the boat a good turn of speed without a lot of heeling.

LEFT: The Australian version of the boat comes with non-slip decks to reduce the maintenance associated with teak.

ABOVE: The cockpit is spacious and perfect for entertaining.



"Jeanneau's designers have done a fantastic job of giving the boat a light, open feel, yet ensuring it meets the needs of a cruiser."



TOP: The owner's suite has a platform double bed with ensuite.

TOP RIGHT: The salon is light and airy with an open feel.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The head off the owner's stateroom is spacious.

Jeanneau has built in numerous features down below that tell you this boat is built for cruising. For example, they've given the boat a forward facing nav station and a u-shaped galley that any sea cook would love. They've also placed hand holds all around the interior. You can move from hand hold to hand hold right across the boat.

The 50 DS is available in a variety of internal layouts. You can have two aft cabins and two forward (presumably this is the charter version where you try to jam in the maximum number of berths). Alternatively, you can also have a large master suite with ensuite forward and two smaller cabins aft (good for charter or when you're having the kids on board); or you can reverse this layout bringing the master suite aft and the two forward (which I don't recommend as the head height aft is restricted by the cockpit); or you can go for my personal favourite, which has a large centre berth with ensuite aft for your guests and a master stateroom with ensuite forward—two suites in a 50 footer, now that's what I call luxury!

To port of the companionway is a forward facing nav station. It's an unusual nav station in that the top of the



nav table is open to the saloon (no back to house the electronics that usually face the navigator). This is a relatively new trend. The idea is that in this day and age of PC navigation, flat screen repeaters and electronics at the helm, you don't need an enclosed nav station to house the bank of radios and screens you see at the nav of a more traditional cruising boat. A lot of the electronics are now at the helm and the remaining bits can be housed in cabinets to the navigator's side, or accessed through a PC. It's an interesting concept. I'd like to hear from readers on how well this works.

To starboard of the companionway is the galley. Resplendent with Corian counter tops, a two burner cook top, oven, refrigerator, and optional microwave and freezer, this is a smick little set-up. It has heaps of storage and it's small enough that you can brace yourself in for cooking in a seaway; very nice indeed.

Moving forward the salon is quite large with a long settee to starboard and shorter one to port. Both can serve as sea berths, although the port settee has been shortened to accommodate a bar—remember this is a French boat—having someplace to store your wine and glasses is de rigueur.

The only thing I'd like to improve about the salon is the ventilation. There is a medium-sized opening hatch forward and a small opening window above the galley stove; all of the other windows and hatches are fixed due to the curvature of the boat. In good weather, when you can keep the forward stateroom hatches and the companionway open, the ventilation would be adequate, but in foul weather the lack of ventilation in the salon would be an issue.

On the boat I tested the master stateroom was forward and I have to say, it's quite nice. It has a centre-line double bed on a raised platform with plenty of stor-

age, hanging room, full length mirror, three opening hatches with fly screens and a nicely sized ensuite. Those of you who have done offshore work will recognise that the centre-line bunk isn't necessarily the place you'd be sleeping on passage, but at anchor or tied up to a dock, this would be a pretty smick place to spend the night.

The heads are nicely done, clean and functional. There is one new innovation worth commenting on and that is a set of folding Plexiglas doors that fold out to create a separate shower stall. It's interesting as another example how boat builders are trying to incorporate 'home' features into boats. As a rule I don't have a problem with this, but some home features just aren't practical on a boat. I'm afraid that folding Plexiglas shower screen fall into this category: sounds great, looks great, but they're not practical. A shower curtain would be a fraction of the cost and weight, work just as well and it would be cheap and easy to replace. Of course, if the folding Plexiglas shower screen helps sell your partner on the boat, it's cheap at twice the price.

Before I leave the interior, I'd like to comment on a few of the smart things that Jeanneau has built into this boat. They've given the boat locking floorboards. A small thing, but you'd be surprised how many boats don't have them. They've also incorporated storage boxes into the under floor spaces, giving you a neat and tidy way of storing food, tools and spare parts. They've glassed floor pans into the under floor spaces and incorporated fore and aft and lateral pipe work to accommodate upgrades that you might do at a later date. A lot of smart thinking that has gone into this boat.

Before I leave the interior, let me say a few words about the engine. Jeanneau have standardized on Yanmar. They offer two sizes: a 75 or 110 hp. The model I tested had a 75 hp Yanmar

and at 3,000 rpm it pushed the boat along at 8 knots into a 20 knot breeze; pretty good, eh?

How does she sail?

All the features in the world won't help a boat if she sails like a dog. So how does the 50 DS Performance sail?

Like a dream is the short answer


We took this boat out in a gusty 20 knot nor-easterly; conditions that would generally show any boat's shortcomings. One of the immediate things you notice about the 50 DS Performance is her initial stiffness. This boat has a very healthy ballast to displacement ratio of 37%, and just as importantly, it's placed down low on a 2.35 metre keel. In 20 knots with full main and genoa, a lot of boats would be over on their ear and your partner would be headed for the airport; not so with the 50 DS. The result delivers a very comfortable amount of heel even in a 20 knot breeze.

The 50 DS Performance also showed a good turn of speed on all points of

sail. We were doing a consistent 8 to 8.5 knots with a bit more a reach. We did ease the traveler and play with the main sheet a bit during the gusts. Philippe Briande has done an excellent job with this hull. It's slippery enough to have a good turn of speed, but stable enough to be a good sea boat.

How does it do against the design brief?

No boat is perfect, and as you can see from my review there are a few things I'd like to see changed. Having said that I have to compliment Jeanneau; in the 50 DS Performance they've produced an extremely good boat that represents excellent value. All in all, they've pretty much hit the design brief right on the head.

The base Performance model is about \$490,000. You'll probably want to add another \$50,000 in extras, so figure an all up price of about \$540,000. You'd be hard pressed to find another 50 footer that offers this level of value. I'll take two, thank you. 




Jeanneau 50 Specifications

LOA	15.07 m
LWL	13.12 m
Beam	4.49 m
Displacement	13,400 Kg
Draft	2.35 m
Ballast	3,640 Kg



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