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2009

BOAT OF THE YEAR

THESE FIVE ENTRIES
DELIVER ON
PERFORMANCE,
PRICE, AND QUALITY

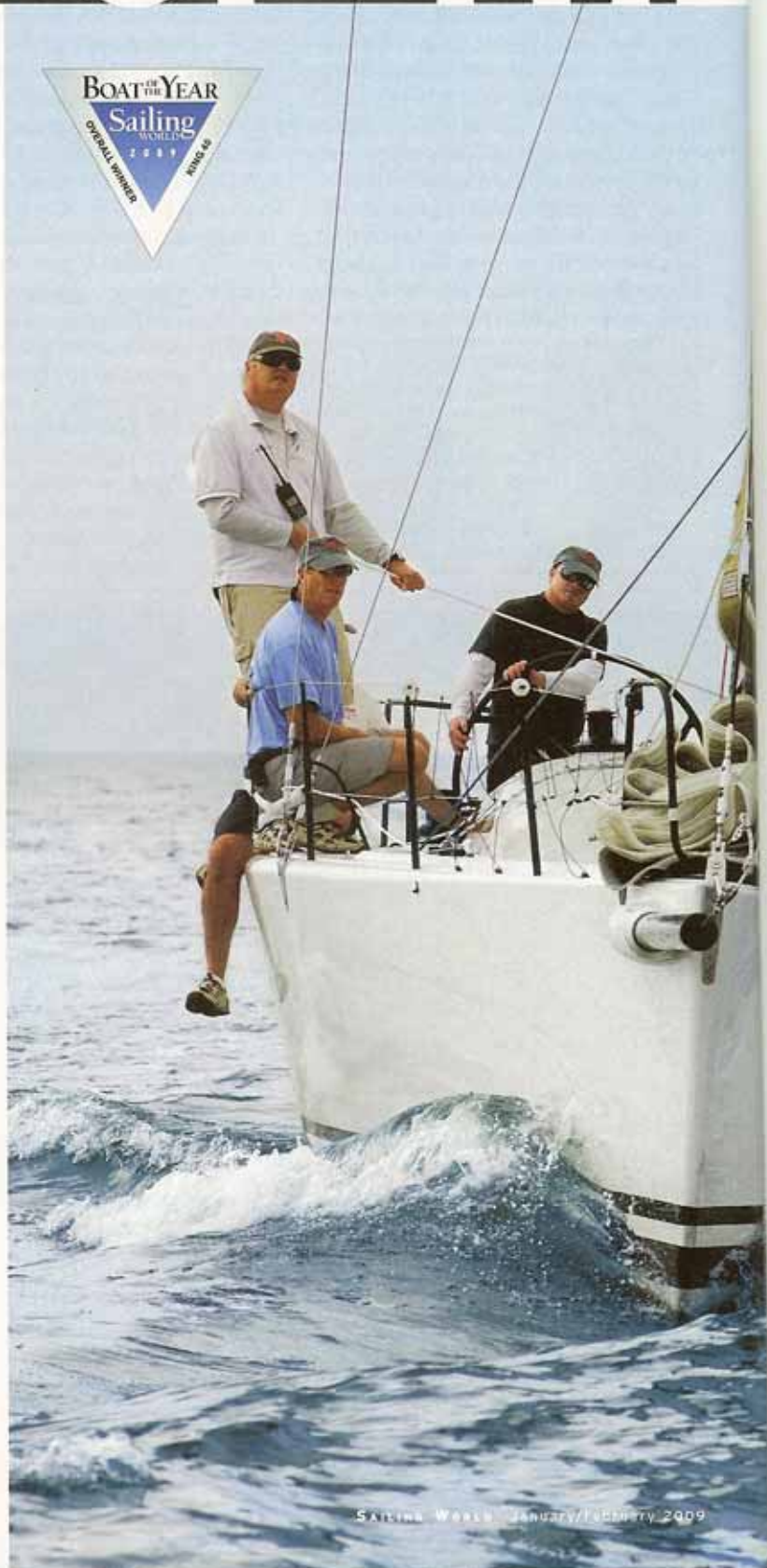
BY TONY BESSINGER
PHOTOS BY WALTER COOPER

We know what you're looking for in a raceboat: speed, quality, utility, and value. Like you, our independent Boat of the Year judges

are racing sailors and they're looking for the same features when they get down to the business of determining the best production boats presented each year. The judges come from different facets of the sport, which allows them to collectively evaluate new designs as they're presented to them in the days following the U.S. Sailboat Show in Annapolis, Md. This year's judging team consisted of sailmaker Chuck Allen, boatbuilder Barrett Holby, and naval architect Greg Stewart. These guys were tasked with distilling the best from a field of 17 new designs. To a man, they all agreed there wasn't a bad one in the bunch, but there were five that will most certainly deliver what you want, and more. Let's get to this year's winners.

OVERALL WINNER KING 40

The King 40 from Summit Yachts possesses the best attributes of a pure raceboat. Thanks to IRC we now get a great, usable interior, too.





OVERALL WINNER KING 40



When SW's judges convened for their final deliberations after nearly a week of test sailing in Annapolis Md., there was little debate that the King 40, from Summit Yachts, is—from the keel to the top of its carbon rig—the quintessential raceboat. Of course, one would expect such a hit from the two partners responsible for the boat: Barry Carroll, formerly of Carroll Marine, and George Carabetta, one of the first owners to embrace the Farr 40 class. The two of them, plus designer Mark Mills, and the builder King Marine in Argentina have delivered a versatile package that's fun to sail, well built, IRC competitive, and priced to move.

Originally designed for consideration in New York YC's search for a new one-design class (the Frers-designed Swan 42 got that nod), the King 40 is first and foremost intended for full-crew racing, and everything about it reflects this. Halyards and the jib-lead controls are all led under the deck. "The systems are simi-

lar to other boats we sailed [during the week]," said Allen. "But when you get into the sail handling, the King 40 just has an edge, both upwind and downwind."

The essential controls were easy to reach from the rail, the cockpit coamings are comfortable, and for the trimmers and the pitman, everything is ergonomically right. "The cockpit is awesome," said Allen. "And, if you're in the middle hiking and you need to get to the vang it's easy to get to." Another system the judges really liked was the push-button

Pros: Great performance and price for a 40-footer. The deck and cockpit layouts lead every sail control to where it should go.

Cons: Early models in a production run tend to be rough around the edges. Our test boat, hull No. 1, was no exception.

Designer's mission accomplished? Mark Mills was tasked with designing a versatile IRC/One-Design racer and did just that. This one won trophies right out of the box.

The King 40 is far from extreme, and it blends the best of what's new and what's proven with crossover designs. The King 40's manageable and powerful sail plan, its IRC-friendly attributes, and its efficient deck layout make it a suitable raceboat for distance and buoy racing.

electric/hydraulic backstay system, with the controls located next to the mainsail trimmer's position.

The King 40 presented to our judges was hull No. 1, and had a full season of campaigning under its waterline, so the interior wasn't the straight-from-the-factory finish the judges normally see. This wasn't only a result of normal race crew abuse; slight imperfections in the interior finish were obviously first-build issues. Being broken in, however, has its advantages, as all the systems on the boat were refined, and the sail package fit the rig perfectly.

Our test boat had the optional retractable carbon-fiber sprit and asymmetric spinnaker package. Other IRC boats we sailed had symmetric spinnakers and poles, and—not surprisingly—we



With high headroom, light-toned wood, and long windows, the King 40 interior will make you want to put the cruising main on and get away for the weekend. The mast and boom (below) are built in Argentina as well. Any pit person will appreciate the simple, but efficient layout of halyards and control lines, many of which are adjustable from the rail.



found the King 40 easier to jibe. Speeding-equipped winches on the cabin top helped in this department.

The King 40 has twin aluminum wheels (each wheel 3'2" diameter) mounted on composite pedestals, which puts the helmsman outboard where he or she can see what's happening, and provides unobstructed access from the stern to the cockpit and the companionway. The wire-and-quadrant steering system was incredibly responsive and smooth.

The King 40's vinyl ester construction helps keep the boat's cost down, and with IRC, there's no advantage in having exotic material, such as carbon fiber, in the hull or deck. The hull and deck are vacuum-bagged foam-core laminates with biaxial and unidirectional E-glass. The hull-to-deck joint is bonded with a molded toe rail built to ORC requirements. Struc-

SUMMIT KING 40

LOA	39'10"
Beam	12'2"
Draft	8'2"
DSPL	15,600 lbs.
SA (u/d)	1,028/1,950 sq. ft.
Designer	Mark Mills
Base price	\$335,000
www.summit-yachts.com	

tural bulkheads are bonded to hull and deck, and structural internal glass units form the base for the interior structure and engine bed. There's also a fabricated anodized aluminum keel frame and mast step. The boat is solid all around and will be competitive after years of hard use.

There have been a number of excellent custom IRC boats showing up on racecourses in the past several years, which

means the rule is succeeding in putting fast, seaworthy designs into owners' hands, particularly in the 40- to 50-foot size range, but few boats we've seen and sailed can match the King 40 in terms of grand-prix performance at production-boat price. It's an ideal boat for windward/leeward racetracks and distance racing, and will reward a good crew and driver. The enthusiasm and support from Carabetta and Carroll is clear—this is their baby after all. With a dozen boats sold (four in the United States, one in Japan, one in Australia, one in Norway, and several in England) the King 40 has obviously hit a chord with IRC racers around the world.