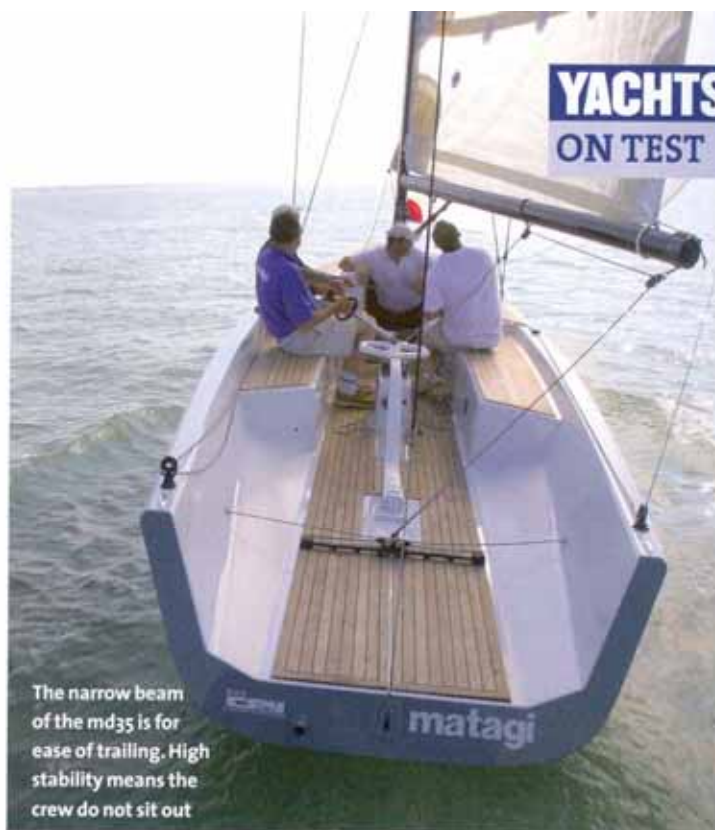


MD 35



Simplicity is the keyword for this fun day racer. The rig has a near-masthead asymmetric for sizzling downwind sailing and teak for a high-quality image



The narrow beam of the md35 is for ease of trailing. High stability means the crew do not sit out

MORE THAN JUST A HEADTURNER

A new one-design day racer certainly caught the eye at Southampton. Jonty Sherwill talks to the creators of the MD35 and takes the prototype for a spin

Since the rise of the sportsboat phenomenon there has been a steady stream of eye-catching new day-sailers, but only a very few have hit the spot. Some have been targeted at replacing established classes while others have been designed for pleasure sailing, but now a new boat with an international pedigree is poised to achieve both.

The md35 is a serious eye catcher, impressively narrow and elegant, almost a scaled-down America's Cupper. Its aesthetic might also owe something to the iconic Wally yachts, but designer Mark Mills claims that its DNA is fundamentally Anglo-Saxon. That means it's designed to be practical and affordable and the team behind this new one-design has a copper-bottomed record in developing successful production boats. Mike Relling of MD Yachts in New Zealand has pushed the project forward alongside the first UK boat owner, Gavin Maber, based on a shared vision.

The boat on test is a prototype built by Craig Partridge Yachts in Auckland, but production is in the hands of Javier Mendez's M Yachts in Buenos Aires. Their high skill levels, but with modest labour rates and the use of non-exotic cored E-Glass and vinylester resin construction, means it is competitively priced.

Running costs are also controlled with strict one-design sail restrictions, but most notable is the ability to ship the boat and all its gear in a standard 40ft container. The mast splits in two, the rudder is in an easily removable cassette and the keel, which is half the boat's 2.5 tonne displacement, is partially lifted during craning into the custom-built cradle. Maximum beam is 2.2m (7.25ft) to allow legal trailing.

The md35's greatest virtue is its simplicity. Intended to be raced by a crew of four, the class rules do not stipulate a crew weight limit, as stability is already high. There is plenty of room for more guests on a

day sail and this dual role capability will be a strong point in the sales pitch.

This is not a sportsboat in the conventional sense, being relatively heavy, but with generous freeboard and a 'legs-in' rule, it can be sailed by all ages. The electric mainsheet winch makes sure of that and this useful workhorse also hoists the mainsail. There are two batteries on board, a small one to start the two-cylinder 12hp diesel engine and one dedicated to the sheet winch, therefore ensuring that overuse will not leave you stranded outside the harbour.

These features will boost the appeal of this boat as a daysailer and the twin berths in the fairly cramped cabin will allow occasional overnighting. To keep the drinks cool, chiller boxes are fitted into recesses in the cabin structure and a marine toilet is on the options list.

Where money has been spent on high-technology it is highly visible. A carbon fibre mast may be de rigueur today, but the choice of PBO composite rigging shows that the md35 is being future-proofed. Final sourcing of these elements is yet to be decided, as has some detailing that will be incorporated into the production tooling. The teak decking is seen as part of the high quality image and will be standard within the £74,894 ex VAT UK list price, which excludes sails and instruments.

Slipping along in only 6 knots of true breeze the md35 is an easy and pleasing boat to sail upwind and down. The prototype is fitted with Tactick's latest wireless instruments and indicated that upwind boatspeed was nearly matching the wind velocity. Weighing 2.5 tonnes, the boat



A dry boat to sail, the md35 is fast sailing deep downwind

With just four crew it might be assumed that things would get busy in a big breeze

tackles wash from powerboats without fuss and should provide a comfortable ride in a wind against tide Solent chop. The near masthead asymmetric kite is set on a 1.25m sprit and best downwind VMG will be achieved sailing deep, but some sizzling speeds can be expected on tight reaches.

With just four crew it might be assumed that things would get rather too busy in a big breeze, but the electric mainsheet winch will free up a pair of hands and allow the helmsman to tend the main at mark roundings. Mainsail trimming upwind is a doddle using the coarse and fine foot buttons and the jib sheets are led through tunnels in the coachroof with a simple, but effective rope hauler for the sheet lead adjustment.

Designer Mark Mills says that the power to weight ratio of the md35 is similar to his offshore racers, so purchasers used to that style of boat will appreciate its good manners, but this boat benefits from its 'no compromise' daysailer style. There are no guardrails, but it has the advantage of an inboard diesel engine and not only does this make docking a low skill procedure, but it adds an air of sophistication that an outboard simply cannot deliver.

The md35 is designed to be a dry boat to sail and once aboard, the high freeboard and flat sheer is immediately apparent. The hull form may look radical, but other features are refreshingly moderate. For example, the mainsail roach extends only slightly beyond the standing backstay and this helps keep light airs sailing drama-free. Although the need for a backstay was debated, its inclusion provides easy rig control, but keen racers will also be



SPECIFICATIONS	MD35	
LOA	10.67m	40ft 0in
LWL	9.25m	34ft 7in
BEAM (MAX)	2.22m	11ft 11in
DRAUGHT	2.15m	7ft 3in
DISP (LIGHTSHIP)	2,450kg	14,991lb
BALLAST	1,200kg	5,600lb
SAIL AREA	53.5m ²	959ft ²
BERTHS	4	
ENGINE	Lombardini LDW502M saildrive	
POWER	9kW	12hp
WATER	20ft	4gal
FUEL	20lt	4gal
SAIL AREA: DISP	29.9	
DISP: LWL	86	
PRICE (EX VAT)	£74,894	

adjusting shroud tensions to suit the conditions.

Sail handling could not be easier, with the kite launching out of the companionway hatch, and a jib furler that hides neatly in a circular deck recess. The jib currently has a soft leech, but the roach area may be increased by adding vertical furlable battens. Backstay and traveller controls are cleated on the mainsheet winch podium and a moulded beam runs the length of the cockpit to provide a foot brace for all the crew. Much design work has gone into creating the super clean deck layout, but realities such as lifering stowage and an anchoring arrangement will need resolving to tick all the boxes.

Some buyers will choose this boat on design merit alone, but to reach critical mass and become a successful one-design the support of yacht clubs will be vital. At 35ft overall, this boat is well above the Sportsboat SBR rating rule limit of 30ft and without guardwires it falls outside the requirements of ISAF Category 4, so there is no obvious proving ground.

The md35 team thinks there would be little achieved racing against dissimilar boats, even if a crack at the Round the Island Race would be fun. More important, in their view, is the potential for low-cost shipping and easy trailing, therefore making inter-club events and championships accessible. With strict owner and family driver rules, the best of the current one-design scene has been gleaned to produce class rules with broad appeal and the development team has an eye on achieving one-design fleet status at major international regatta venues.

This no-compromise approach is a bold strategy, but the potential reward is a fully sorted and economical one-design. It is tempting to draw comparisons with recently publicised boats like the Luca Brenta 30 and 38 daysailers, but in reality a Mumm 30 or even a 6-metre is a closer match. The md35 will be easier to sail than either of these and therefore a more practical boat for a fun day out with the family, or even single-handed.

Over recent years many experienced sailors have been keen to downsize from offshore yachts and concentrate on some inshore fun, but for others the fast and furious sportsboat scene is a step too far. The md35 offers a more civilised alternative and a level of style that her creators hope many will find irresistible.