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Dragonfly 28 Sport

Feeling a bit jaded with sailing? Tired of visiting the same old places?
Chris Beeson recommends a 28ft dose of Dragonfly

For the life of me, I cannot understand why multihulls aren't more popular in the UK. Here is a 28ft yacht that charges around at 15 knots without any effort. She's as close-winded as a monohull, she doesn't heel more than 10° and she has bags of stowage and outside space. Add a set of outriggers that fold in so she'll take a single marina berth, a minimum draught of 1ft 4in and the fact that she's trailable – just – and it all adds up to a compelling coastal cruising offer from her Danish builder, Quorning. Some will scoff about her inverted stability – she's as stable upside-down as rightside-up – but you'd need to sail recklessly to capsize her.

The new Dragonfly 28 Sport replaces the old 920, launched in 1996. Using feedback from owners and a new CAD design system, the 28 differs significantly from her predecessor. I tested the 920 when she launched and I remember ending the test exhilarated and completely drenched. The 28 has a higher cockpit, raised beams, massive spray rails on the main hull and finer mesh trampolines to deflect much of the spray, all of which adds up to a much drier ride – even with the log reading speeds

in the mid-teens, I didn't need my oilskin trousers. A hundred other tweaks and adjustments have made the 28 a much better boat: easier to use, faster, more comfortable – and £30,000 cheaper.

Performance

The Sport version has a 13.6m (44ft 7in) carbon spar and Elvström's Technora laminate sails, including a big flat-head mainsail. The Touring version has a 12.1m (39ft 8in) aluminium spar – a shorter carbon mast is available too, – and laminate sails with polyester yarns. The result is an extra 9m² (97sq ft) of sail area for the Sport. Tuck in the first reef and her sail area is similar to the Touring.

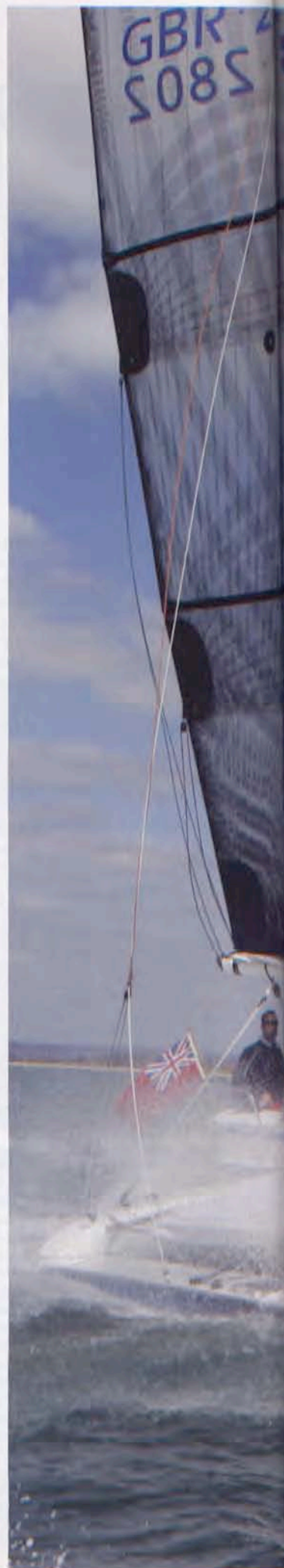
After waiting for the tide to rise sufficiently to clear Emsworth Yacht Harbour's sill, we potted out under outboard, attached to the tiller by a push rod, found space to turn into the 17-knot east-northeasterly breeze and hoisted the mainsail. Bearing away, we unrolled the jib and she tore off down Emsworth Channel, making 7.1–7.8 knots at an apparent wind angle of 140–150°, in 11–14 knots of apparent wind, with the centreboard humming enthusiastically. Acceleration and deceleration are blisteringly quick and, while I took all

the usual measurements, this boat is all about apparent wind. If you feel her slowing down, head up a few degrees until you feel the speed building, and the apparent wind increasing and coming forward, then you can bear away and take the apparent wind with you. For instance, if you're sailing at 11–12 knots – as we often were – a true wind angle of 100–110° turns into an apparent wind angle of 50–60°.

We headed out of Chichester Harbour on a 50–60° fetch and the log was soon showing 15–16 knots in 15–20 knots of apparent wind. I was a bit unsure to start with, startled by the speed, but the basics of multihull sailing are quickly learned and I soon felt tuned in.

Predictably, the wind dropped a few knots outside the harbour so we decided to fly the 80m² (860sq ft) asymmetric kite to keep the speed up. With 11–14 knots across the windward outrigger and close reaching at 60–80° to the apparent wind, she clocked 10–14 knots. Then we tried some windward work and I was surprised to see her match a

Dragonflying! Sailing well into double-digits is unnerving at first, but once you're settled it's just as exhilarating as it looks







The coastal cruising saloon dines six but lacks ventilation. With the grey sole panel folded up, it's easy to walk forward



No frills but fully functional with sink opposite and plenty of stowage



There's a perfect 'den' berth for the kids below the cockpit



A space-saving sliding door separates the saloon and heads



Basic forecabin through the structural bulkhead



A clever rearrangement of the saloon leaves you with two good single seaberths, but they do restrict others moving fore and aft, so not ideal

Dragonfly 28 Sport

Key features

Both outriggers can be hauled in, reducing beam to 2.54m, less than a 28ft monohull

A block-and-tackle on each aft beam clips to the boom to act as both preventer and kicker

The view is excellent from the flip-down helm seats and all control lines are close to hand



There's a huge amount of stowage in the floats for dinghies, fenders, bikes, anchors, BBQs and so on

Centreboard and rudder kick up to prevent damage in the event of a grounding

100-POINT BOAT TEST



She was designed from the outside in, so the topsides have recesses to accommodate the stowed outriggers. The sprayrails also improve space below

good monohull's angle of around 30° to the wind, and tack through 90° – very respectable. In 20–22 knots of apparent wind, though, I can't think of any 28ft monohulls that can make 10.2 knots upwind.

Back in the harbour, we ragged her up and down Emsworth Channel a couple more times for the cameras. In one gust, she heeled a bit further than usual and the single rudder, mounted under the central hull, lost its grip while I was trying to bear away. Rather than spin out like a monohull, she carried on sprinting straight while the main was eased and steerage restored.

At the end of our four-hour test (including 20 minutes alongside Hayling Island Sailing Club's pontoon), our maximum speed was 17.8 knots, our average speed 7.3 knots, and we had covered 32 miles.

Living below

This, perhaps, is a trimaran's Achilles' heel because the central hull will always be narrower than a monohull of similar length. With outriggers folded, the Dragonfly has an overall beam of 2.54m (8ft 4in), considerably leaner than the average of a little over 3m (9ft 10in) for coastal cruising monohulls.

There might not be as much space below decks, but what there is looks very well finished with some very thoughtful detail, and if you don't like the standard blue-and-grey trim, you can choose teak or maple veneers. Under the wide companionway there's 5ft 9in of

'I can't think of a 28ft monohull that would make 10.2 knots upwind at 30° apparent'

headroom just below the hatch garage, 6ft forward of that and 5ft 9in up by the mast. Big coachroof windows flood the space with light but they don't open. The only ventilation is from the main companionway hatch and a circular hatch in the forward cabin.

The saloon is a simple affair, with two settees either side of a table. There's stowage behind and below the settees and below the raised sole to port. To starboard there's a lower sole, with a hatch for transducer access, so you can walk forward upright, but a ledge folds down from the table's base – also

the centreboard casing – so you can plant your feet. A leaf below the port seating folds out to create a 6ft 6in by 2ft 7in single berth, with the seat back cushion completing the mattress. The lids of the port sole lockers provide the starboard berth's infill.

The galley is basic but entirely functional. There's a butane cylinder stove to port with stowage above, below and aft of it, and a sink to starboard with similar stowage. Al Wood of Multihull Solutions, the UK's Dragonfly dealer, uses a coolbox for weekends away with his family but if you want a fridge, one can be installed at the expense of one of the rather natty roll-top galley lockers. Pressurised water, though not installed on this boat, is now standard in the 28 but they're still struggling to find a hot water system that will work for this boat.

The bin is situated below the

companionway steps. These slide from side to side to provide access to the berth below the cockpit. It's 15cm (6in) wider than you see here because the shelving has been moved to the foot of the berth. It's perfect for kids but a squeeze for adults, even friendly ones.

A sliding door in the saloon's forward bulkhead leads to the full-width heads, fairly basic but fine for a family weekend away. The sliding door separates it from the saloon and a blind rolls down to offer a degree of privacy. Headroom is 5ft 5in and while there's a vent, there's no opening port but as there's no hot water, just a hand pump for cold water, condensation won't be a problem. There's a locker above the sink to port and stowage to starboard, opposite the heads. The holding tank is under the port saloon berth and the pump is at the base of the forward bulkhead.

Below the forward cabin's 6ft 11in by 5ft 4in double berth, there's plenty of stowage. The circular hatch provides light and ventilation.

Design

Børge Quorning started boatbuilding in 1967 but, in 1989, Børge and son Jens

invented the swing-wing system and since then the company's output shifted exclusively to the Dragonfly range of folding trimarans.

The 28 is packed with ingenuity inside and out, making her a much better boat than her predecessor. On the 920 you needed to winch out the outriggers – a slow, laborious task – but now a series of purchase systems means you can do it by hand, though you'll still need a couple of winch turns at the end just to tighten the trampoline and fasten the safety strap that prevents them accidentally folding. With the outriggers folded in, she has 2ft less beam than the 920 but overall length increases from 8.75m (28ft 8in) to 9.99m (32ft 9in). Because the beams are angled downwards slightly for improved rigidity, the main hull rises 8in on the outriggers, providing extra stability in all but the strongest winds. This also keeps the shrouds tight enough to support the rig despite the decreased shroud base.

The outriggers have also been redesigned. They have a much finer entry and are now asymmetrical. The inner side is curved but the outer is almost flat, which provides a great 'rail' for upwind work and can generate 750kg of lift, according to the computer. The outriggers are also 30cm (1ft) longer and their bows extend 1ft beyond the main hull, hence the grey sacrificial bow section (see photo on p101). This moves the centre of buoyancy forward and improves her resistance to digging in the leeward bow.

Perhaps the 28's biggest step ahead of the 920 is that, when trailing, you don't need to remove the outriggers or the rudder, just

wind in the hulls, drop the mast and you're away. We're told that it takes between 30 minutes and an hour to get her from trailing to sailing.

Sailplan

The Sport carries an extra 7m² of mainsail and an extra 2m² of jib compared to the Touring, and that extra horsepower does lift her performance, as the name suggests. In this respect she's a genuine multi-purpose boat, one that you can enjoy ragging around at high speed, endlessly tweaking a dozen sail controls for that extra tenth of a knot, but one that's also perfectly suited to gentle family cruising. Stick in a reef and you'll turn down the turbo enough for a brisk yet relaxing tour of anywhere that has water above knee-height.

There are a couple of sail controls unfamiliar to the monohull sailor: Each jib sheet runs through a barber-hauler rigged on the outrigger, which allows greater control of the clew position when trimming offwind. Mainsheet and fine tuning are secured to a strong point on the cockpit sole and there's also a simple 4:1 purchase on each of the aft beams that clips onto the boom and, together with the mainsheet, this acts like a vang so you can control boom position. This is another improvement from the 920, which had a cockpit-wide traveller at shin and knee level.

Offwind sails are flown from a bowsprit that folds back horizontally and has a fixed bobstay. The 920's bowsprit had a vertical hinge and a purchase system on the bobstay, but this wasn't thought to be up to the loads associated with modern offwind sails such as a Code Zero,



Despite the spray, the high cockpit is dry – even without the sprayhood

and it made bows-to mooring difficult. The new setup also enables the 28's bowsprit to be canted, using a purchase system rigged to the outrigger bows, so she'll sail dead downwind.

Deck layout

The transom is open, giving access to the dinghy-style kick-up rudder, the 10hp outboard and the push rod that links it to the aluminium tiller. The helmsman sits on boards that fold down from the cockpit's stainless steel tube guardrails and the throttle is hidden under the starboard cockpit locker lid.

Sheet bins in the coamings keep the control lines, of which there are many, out of the way. There are two Andersen 24 two-speed self-tailing winches on the coachroof and two more in the cockpit. To port of the companionway is the centreboard 'fuse' – a lever that releases the

centreboard in the event of a grounding, to prevent damage.

Forward of the sprayhood's moulding, there are hand-holds to keep you secure while walking the narrow sidedecks or the wide trampolines but, once the bowsprit's in place, there's no reason to go forward because all the control lines are led aft to the cockpit and the anchor is stowed in an outrigger and launched from the trampoline.

Under power

She'll cruise happily at 6 knots with the 10hp outboard, faster with the 15hp you might choose if you're in a strongly tidal area, but why motor at 6 knots when you can sail at 16? She turns nimbly enough forward and astern but remember that she has a fair bit of windage and only 10hp to control it. If the wind gets up in tight spaces, you'll need to refine your manoeuvring plans. ▲

YM's 100-POINT RESULTS

Take a **360°** tour
of the Dragonfly 28 Sport at
www.yachtingmonthly.com

UNDER SAIL

PERFORMANCE

It's impossible to travel at such exhilarating speed without grinning. To achieve it with little knowledge about multihulls is testament to the boat's ease of use. The concept of a boat that is a sporty two-seater one day and a beach-bound people-mover the next is a compelling and a joyous one.

10_{/10}

AT THE HELM

At above 15 knots, the helm is unbelievably responsive but not remotely twitchy. The sail trim 'talks' through the tiller with a megaphone and I had weather helm, lee helm and neutral helm regularly, depending on sail balance. Listen to the helm and you'll soon have her trimmed to your tastes.

9_{/10}

ON DECK

DECK LAYOUT

If you don't keep the lines tidy, the cockpit can become something of a cat's cradle, with 16 control lines snaking about, but it does mean that you don't need to leave the cockpit unless you're using the spinnaker. Sailing shorthanded is easy and the cockpit is big enough for the crew to work unhindered.

9_{/10}

SAIL PLAN

With sail area comparable to a 35ft cruiser-racer but a quarter of the displacement, she's very powerful. We were pushing the limits and at one stage had to winch the mainsheet, suggesting a reef was required, but the sailplan is easily managed, easily balanced and incredibly effective.

9_{/10}

BUILD

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

Compared to the 920, no mug herself, the 28 has climbed a couple of rungs on the evolutionary ladder: packed with impressive design; build quality is exceptional. Changes made since the launch of the prototype we tested show Quorning listens to feedback and improves its product.

10_{/10}

MAINTENANCE

There are fewer systems to maintain – no hot water, no inboard engine – but everything you need to get at is accessible. De-rigging her for trailing looks like a challenging job to me but I'm assured it takes less than an hour. She's right on the limit of trailability but with a big 4x4, it's possible.

8_{/10}



With floats hauled in, beam is reduced but length is increased

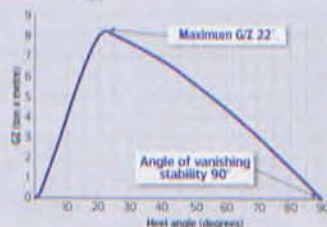
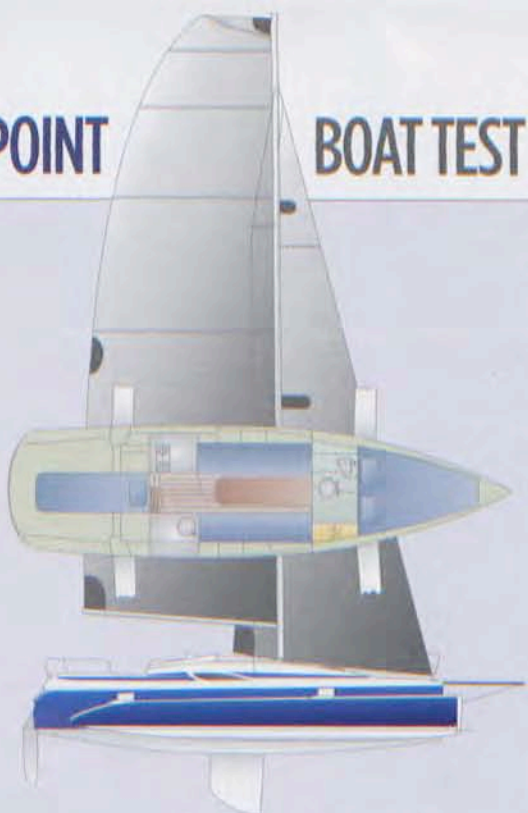
CONSTRUCTION

All three hulls and structural inner mouldings are sandwich construction with PVC closed-cell foam between hand-laid GRP, making her unsinkable. The hull-deck joint is a bonded flange. There are watertight crash bulkheads in each hull. The centre hull has vinylster-infused laminate structural bulkheads to handle the mast and crossbeam compression loads. The other bulkheads are plywood. The rudder and centreboard are epoxy-infused GRP and the beams are vinylster-infused laminate.

TECHNICAL

Dragonfly 28 Sport

- Price £165,000 (as seen)
- LOA main hull 8.75m (28ft 8in)
- LOA waterline 8.6m (28ft 2in)
- LOA sailing 9.05m (29ft 8in)
- LOA folded 9.99m (32ft 9in)
- Beam folded 2.54m (8ft 4in)
- Beam sailing 6.5m (21ft 4in)
- Draught 1.7m/0.4m (5ft 7in/1ft 4in)
- Displacement 2,000kg (4,409lb)
- Ballast None
- Sail area 63m² (678sq ft)
- Engine 10hp outboard
- Fuel 12.5 lit (2.75 gal)
- Water 80 lit (17.6 gal)
- Displ/length 75.1
- Sail area/displ 40.3
- Ballast ratio (%) n/a
- RCD category B
- STIX n/a
- Designer Jens Quorning
- Builder Quorning Boats
- Dealer Multihull Solutions
- Tel 01243 370707
- Website www.multihullsolutions.co.uk



THREE ALTERNATIVE CHOICES

1 Telstar 28: US\$79,900 sailaway
Also a swing-wing trimaran, but more sedate in her performance. She has a similar layout below, but greater beam

2 Corsair 28CR: US\$121,000 ex-factory
Another quick, foldable tri. Has a less sophisticated folding mechanism, so the outside of the floats need antifouling, too

3 Akilaria 40: Used from £153,000
A reasonable option for short-handed, high-performance cruising, but not nearly as family-friendly



BELOW DECK

CHART TABLE

There is no chart table or instrument space below but the saloon table will suffice while you're picking out your waypoints. After that you'll be having so much fun on deck that you'll get by, like Al Wood does, with a hand-held chartplotter. You could use a paper chart in a plastic sleeve for paper plotting.

2_{/10}

GALLEY

With a two-burner stove to port, a sink to starboard and plenty of storage space, it ticks most of the coastal cruising boxes. It's basic but well finished and spacious. The lack of a fridge isn't ideal. One can be fitted but be wary of adding too much weight. Al uses a coolbox without complaint.

6_{/10}

HEADS

A pump heads was a welcome surprise; I was expecting a chemical loo. But the lack of standing headroom restricts comfort and the rudimentary blind that separates the heads from the forward cabin does compromise privacy. Stowage is good, ventilation isn't bad. It's an adequate heads for coastal cruising.

5_{/10}

LIVING BELOW

She's basic below, but bearing in mind she's a coastal cruiser, the fit-out is good. The lack of hot water is a drawback but it's unlikely you'll be doing anything other than cooking and sleeping below anyway. If comfort matters more than speed, range and entertainment, she's not for you.

6_{/10}

TOTAL SCORE

In the wrong hands things could go wrong fairly quickly so she's not the best for someone new to sailing. For a skipper and crew that know the ropes – maybe ex-dinghy sailors or enthusiastic but jaded monohull cruisers – she is 28ft of hull-flying, spray-raising fun and she cannot fail to reinvigorate your love of sailing. She's not cheap but there's no mystery where the money has been spent, this boat is extremely well built and thought through. She's trailable, fits a single berth and she'll make you smile again and again.

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