

On the up and up

This locally built cat still gets
the cream after all these years

WORDS + PHOTOS BARRY TRANTER



The Australian production yacht industry was ambushed by an armada of imported boats in the 1990s, but the Seawind 1000, introduced in 1994, is still with us — and thriving.

At the time of the Sydney International Boat Show (August 07) Seawind Catamarans had launched 176 Seawind 1000s. Orders taken during the boat show circuit will push that number above 200

“Self-tacking jib: more important than beer”

and there is no reason to assume the 1000's popularity will stop there.

The boat's appeal is not hard to define, but it is rare for that appeal to last 13 years. Perhaps its occasional refinements over the years have been enough to maintain its sparkle. The latest version is this 1000XL whose changes are small but significant.

The most obvious is its extended sterns. The original 10m, 33ft overall length has grown to 10.85m, or 35ft 6in.

“Three 1000 owners in Miami do a lot of racing,” says Seawind's Brent Vaughan. “They extended the transoms to raise the stern and get more waterline length. It seemed a natural progression for us to adapt this to the production boat. We also added steps in the extension.”

The bottom step is a landing platform

so you can bring a dinghy alongside. The swim ladder lives under a hatch in this platform, a feature adopted from the 1000's big brother, the Seawind 1160.

SELF-TACKING JIB

Another 1160 feature adopted for the XL is the self-tacking jib, which for social sailing is more important to a relaxed outing than a fridge full of beer. Non-sailors (or reluctant sailors) love the self-tacker as it takes all the pain out of sailing. To tack the boat you spin the wheel and everything else is taken care of. Guests are oblivious. I am reminded again that the self-tacker brings a sailing boat close to the powerboat ideal — once the craft is underway one person can perform the whole operation, and that is how many families like it. These are family boats.

Two accommodation layouts are available; one has a sleeping cabin in each bow and stern and the bathroom amidships in the port hull. The other has the bathroom aft in the port hull. The berths in the bow areas are snug doubles. The table in the deck saloon lowers to form a king-sized sleeping area. There is no shortage of beds.

The saloon is open to the cockpit, separated at anchor or mooring by roll-up fabric panels. This is another feature which owners find attractive, that the living space and the cockpit space are one. The kids head for the trampoline area (wouldn't you?) to escape the adults. The adults enjoy the party area aft.



HIGH-THRUST YAMAHAS

Seawind 1000s have outboard auxiliaries, twin 9.9hp High-Thrust Yamaha four-strokes. These are mounted in pods on the hulls' inboard sides and when they are not needed you pull on a lanyard each side and the motors are raised out of the water.

“He didn’t hesitate to tack a metre from a bloody big rock”

The 2:1 mainsail halyard is another novelty on the XL. Multihull sails are of heavy cloth and usually fully battened, which adds to the weight. The halyard makes the main easier to hoist — we used a winch only for the last metre — but there is a lot of halyard, which needs to be coiled and stowed in the bag.

We unroll the jib and go sailing. There is little wind. This is winter in Sydney, though the weather is harder to predict these days. (‘Global warming’?

Or should we call it ‘climate change’?) We hunt around and find a bit of breeze.

PERFORMANCE

Performance is not really relevant for a cruising boat (nobody really cares!) but we get a gust of 14 knots True when she is doing 7.3 knots at about 50 degrees True. She can point at up to 40 degrees True but there is little — ahem — point; multis aren’t at their best being squeezed hard on the wind. The first time I steered a Seawind 1000 I was obeying all my monohull instincts, trying to squeeze her high on the wind, when Seawind founder and CEO Richard Ward suggested, gently, that we might all be happier if I freed her up a few degrees. Later, when he was steering, he didn’t hesitate to tack a metre from a bloody big rock; after I opened my eyes I realised he must be confident of his boat’s tacking ability.

In even light airs the 1000 tacks every time — not all cats do, even in the 21st Century. The reliable tacking combined with the self-tacking jib means that working upwind is easy. Off the breeze



Brent reports that they have seen 22 knots on the clock, down a big wave with the company's delivery skipper on the helm. "10-15 knots is quite achievable," he says, "with the sea on a quarter."

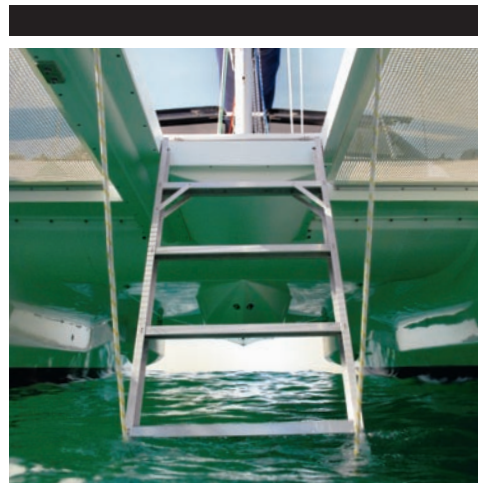
The owner of this boat had specified the optional bowsprit (it can fold upwards when needed) to handle the screecher (a multi-hull term for an off-wind headsail), which is on a furler. Brent reckons this sail can be carried as high as 60 degrees True, if you need more sail in light airs, but its primary role will be for reaching.

Our owner had also added a fine-tuner to the mainsail sheet, which is a great idea. The standard mainsheet tail exits from a cam cleat down low, near deck level. If you want to sheet hard on in a breeze you can end up sitting on the deck bracing with the feet against the crossbeam, then pushing down to cam off. This happened to me during a race when a skipper was calling for more speed. Shouting, more like it. Perhaps it needs never to happen to a cruising crew. The fine tuner on this boat is mounted at boom

height, so you pull down to sheet on the mainsail fort that last little bit.

You learn a lot when you go on test sails with prospective customers. Professional pontificators (like me) and marketers (like Brent) may think they know it all, but no one does. Potential owners or shoppers inject a touch of reality. 'Keeping it real' for us on this outing was a couple who had dinghy and beach cat experience in their not-so-distant youth. Now they were looking for their first big boat. She is susceptible to seasickness, he wants to fish. A cat is a stable platform, therefore able to cater to her needs, avoiding sickness, and his, the fishing obsession, which can also rank as a sickness of sorts.

I suspect that even the Seawind guys, great enthusiasts for their boats, are a bit surprised by the continuing popularity of the 1000. This latest iteration of the Seawind 1000 is more complete than its predecessors and this is still a lot of boat for the money — a 10.85m, four-cabin yacht for a base price of \$314,775 or, as tested, \$340,000. ⚓



SPECS	SEAWIND 1000XL
LOA:	10.85m
Beam:	5.9m
Draft:	1m
Underwing clearance:	0.8m
Mainsail:	45sq m
Engines:	Twin Yamaha 9.9hp
Fuel:	120lt
Water:	400lt
Base Price:	\$314,775
Contact:	(02) 9810 1844
Web:	www.seawindcats.com

+	Self-tacking jib Extremely stable
-	Nothing to report