

# New Austral TS ~A Bigger A20



*Another trailer sailer to come onto the already crowded scene is the Austral 24. But this one has the recommendation of coming from a strong pedigree. Paul Hopkins tested it and was disappointed at finding some points detracting from what would otherwise be a very good TS.*

AUSTRAL yachts are built at Newton, South Australia and the long-established Austral 20 is that State's most numerous trailable yacht between 5.5 metres and seven metres (18' & 23') overall.

The 20 has an enviable record in South Australia's racing world: First in the Tripolis in 1978 and 1979. First 1979 and 1980 in Pt. Vincent Regatta. First 1979 Milang-Goolwa race. First 1976, 1979 and 1980 in Goolwa-Meningie race. Champion team in SA Trailerable Yacht teams event 1977, 1978 and 1980.

Add an Australian Design Award and the builder's motto of "Austral yachts are designed for those that cruise and like to do some racing! Those that race

and like to do some cruising!" and reasons for the owners' reasoning come to the fore.

The success of the Austral 20 prompted her builders to create the Austral 24. It's unmistakably "Austral" in its bulbous sides, lines and finish. Almost two years of design — inside and out — and attention to detail rewarded the builders with orders before the boat was launched.

The first A24, Foremost, hit the water mid-June 1980 and immediately won the Whyalla to Port Augusta "Jacks Blue Water Yachting Classic" in appalling conditions. With Peter Sievwright at the helm, Foremost took line honours as well as winning the trailerable yacht section. A strong northerly gale blew for



most of the race, fluctuating from 30 to 50 knots, and gusting to 55 knots. A short steep chop almost three metres high compounded wind conditions.

Peter Sievwright, a champion in several classes, said Foremost performed magnificently with no vices and was particularly stiff on the wind. Hull shape, weight distribution, a well balanced sail plan and good crewing gave it the ability to power through the "survival" conditions. No doubt a magnificent effort for a new yacht first time in the water.

It's apparent that Austral Yachts is aiming the A24 at owners of A20s who want a bigger boat and it offers a family-sized package resembling the smaller yacht which will fit in nicely with the established association.

And why not? The A20 has a fine reputation, a strong following (especially in South Australia where seakindly yachts do best) and her bigger sister offers just a little more of everything.

Austral Yachts make a big point about ballast ratio, stability and righting ability. The A20 has passed the SAYRA self righting test based on the Victorian Yachting Council rules for trailerable yachts. Test involves pulling the boat down until the mast is under water with the mainsail sheeted.

The A24 has the same wide flat run to the turn of the bilge as the A20. This gives good waterline beam and, coupled with a drop keel of 446 kg, the righting arm is wider than that of a narrow waterline centreboarder which may have its ballast in the skeg.

However, after sailing Frank Strange's brand new Austral 24 on windy Gippsland Lakes in Victoria, I believe the drop keel should be locked down to ensure self-righting. In my opinion, should that weighty drop keel happen to crash into the top of its case in a knock-down, the skipper would have internal water problems and the keel's centre of gravity would be above the water line. Not conducive to self-righting.

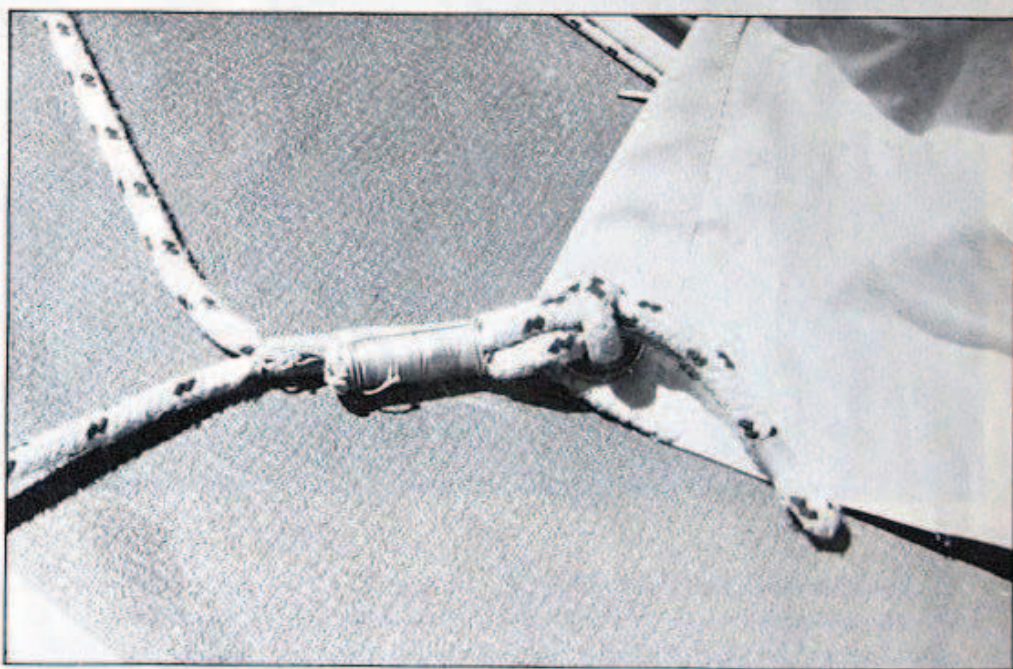
Frank's boat did not have a keel lock-down device yet it needs it.

## Construction

The Austral 24 mouldings are in line with her little sister's quality of finish. Hull and deck are hand-laid. The hull is multilayer with extra glass reinforcing in areas of maximum stress. Deck is reinforced throughout with balsa core



*Deck and cockpit layouts are functional with good non-skid. Criticisms are that traveller blocked main hatch and taking all control lines to cockpit required stowage pouches to keep down the tangles.*



*Austral 24's good method of attaching sheets to jib clew. Sheets jam with loop sliced into end. Another stiff length of rope is spliced to sheet. Loop goes through cringle and stiff rope through loop to make the connection.*

sandwich construction. This gives stiffness and insulation against condensation.

The test boat showed teething problems. For example, the forehatch locking hinge had pulled away (screws aren't good enough — through bolts are a must). The port bow anchor line fairlead had pulled out (screws again). The mast had a pronounced bend to port — the rigging wasn't adjusted properly.

Spreaders threatened to tear the mainsail — padding or shroud "wheels" were needed to protect sail.

The traveller got in the way each time we tacked with four men in the cockpit and one roving from sidedeck to cabin. The traveller blocks the main cabin hatchway and proved a nuisance.

The cleat for the headsail is positioned behind its winch on the cockpit coaming — next to useless in a strong wind as the



has pushpit and pulpit with safety lines right around. She's not exactly overburdened with stanchions with only two a side.

Her transom boasts a S/S fold-up boarding ladder and outboard bracket and smart rudder assembly featuring a lift-up tiller. The tiller had a little play but not as much as the rudder blade which needed either a bush or a lock nut on the swivel bolt.

The cockpit is small, quite deep, comfortably narrow, stepped and self-draining. Sail and gear lockers are under the starboard seats.

All control lines lead back to the cockpit — and what a mess of lines, sheets and halyards we had in the cockpit. Line stowage pouches are needed to clear the tangle.

Anchor locker right forward is just big enough. Foredeck hatch is translucent and said to be strong enough to walk on. The hatch cover lifts aft to give through-flow of air into cabin. (Locking catch had been ripped off — definitely needs through bolts especially as the hatch cover opens aft and could admit much green water.)

Non-skid on deck, sidedecks, cabin top, and in cockpit is good. Yet one had to be careful when walking in the slippery forehatch area. Also, the aft-led control lines and halyards along the cabin top are inclined to roll under one's foot. Care is needed.

Deck layout is functional. The cockpit is okay for three crew — more is a crowd.

Rig is 1/4 set on a tapered mast with uppers, lowers, forestay and backstay. The Austral brochure shows a baby stay which wasn't fitted to the test boat.

Spars are alloy and rigging is stainless.

Shroud attachment points are wide on the rails for maximum mechanical advantage and load spreading.

A neat arrangement is the way the headsail sheet attaches to the clew: Sheet loop passes through clew cringle and a short length of rope spliced into base of loop is slipped through loop. Does away with dangerous shackles which can knock an eye out and untidy bow lines.

## Handling

The Austral 24 handles beautifully. To prove a point, Frank Strange sailed his boat out of his northside Metung Yacht Club pen into a stiff southerly. Unfortunately, the wind caught the headsail, turned the boat away from the

marina exit, and temporarily jammed the hull against a mooring pile pointing downwind.

Another gust propelled her free, into a deadend, and in just over her own length, she rounded up, tacked and sailed clear. Later, we sailed her back in, dropping mainsail then headsail — coasting in the last 100 metres on her mast.

These rather drastic manoeuvres proved her handling qualities beyond doubt. She swivels around her relatively narrow and deep drop keel and is extremely responsive to rudder movements.

Frank, previously famous in the catamaran world when the cat was emerging to general acceptance, wasn't keen to do another sails-only exit yet was amazed that the A24 had manoeuvred in such a restricted area. He, like I, had expected to end up halfway through one of the moored yachts.

Our test wind gusted to 25 knots and the A24 was comfortable under full main and No. 3 working jib. That south wind was cold and even the locals who crewed for us — Steve Earl, Marc Hall and Michael Maloney — rugged up.

We concluded that the Austral 24 was a good seaboat — built to take rough water. We couldn't induce cavitation in the rudder at excessive angles of heel. The blade shuddered and wobbled a bit because of the loose swivel bolt yet didn't lose steerage.

Runs, works and reaches — and an impromptu "race" against a deep reefed Boomaroo 22 — were enjoyed. The A24 was stiff, responsive and a joy to sail.

Fix several annoying items, tune her and she would become close to the ideal racing compromise in the trailerable cruiser/racer world.

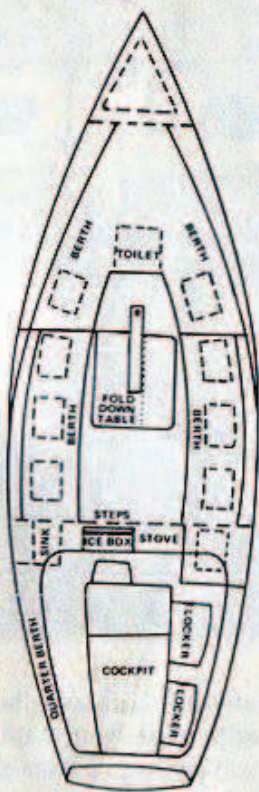
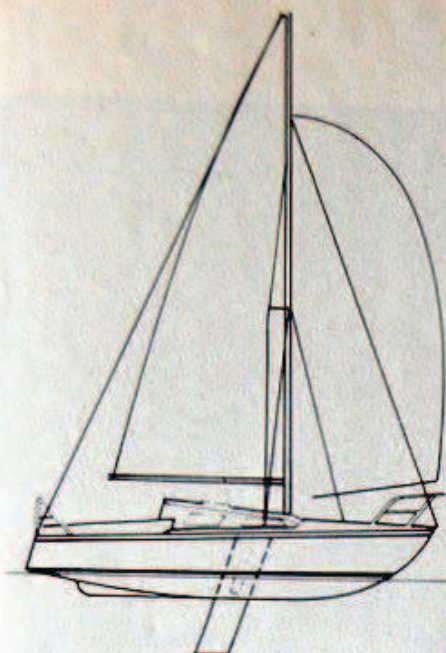
## Accommodation

I left accommodation layout to last because I wanted to get in some enthusiastic words on handling and performance.

To my mind, the A24 is cramped and could be claustrophobic. Its huge drop keel housing and portside half bulkhead shuts in the living area without really dividing it.

The test boat has a sliding hatch which gives good access to the main cabin, steps with extra ice box below, and once in the cabin, every necessity. However, to get everything in, the builder had to be very ingenious.

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crew could be half underwater down there. There should be a cleat near the top of the companionway for easy headsail cleating in heavy weather.

These oversights are more than annoyances and no doubt will be cured as the Austral 24 is developed and improved.

## Layout

We found the Austral 24 — even when heeled to 25 knot wind gusts — easy to scramble about. Her foredeck has a pronounced turtle which gives almost horizontal surfaces when heeled. Her sidedecks proved wide and uncluttered with plenty of cabintop handholds. She



# Austral TS

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The stove slides out from beneath the cockpit (it stows under built-up section of companionway's external step). Sink is set above the port quarter berth. Batteries are neatly boxed to port alongside the half bulkhead, snug into the drop keel case. Toilet is under the middle section of the forward vee berths. Drop keel electric winch is mounted high on the case above an inspection window.

The old compromise game plays havoc with small trailable yachts. It's so difficult to pack performance, self-righting, and family accommodation into a 7.47 m yacht only 2.36 m wide.

The solution is simpler if shoal-draft-with-centreplate configuration is used by the designer. Austral has done well on accommodation seeing they opted for a drop-keel.

A pop-top is available for those who like headroom. But a pop-top may not qualify for sailing in 50 knot winds. The VYC has a thing about pop-tops since a few trailer sailors wearing them went deep sea diving last season.

Five can sleep in the Austral 24. Tall men can sit in the main cabin without hitting their heads on the ceiling. Four can sit at the table for meals. Backrests are good and at the right height.

There's plenty of stowage for clothes, plates and bics and pieces under bunks, in side shelves and in cupboards. The squabs are very comfortable. "Dressing gown" material on the walls breathes class and reduces condensation. Chromed window surrounds add to finish.

The main cabin berths are a bit on the short side at 1.8 metres (5'9"). The forward vee berths are about 1.83 metres (6 ft) long. The quarter berth is just big enough.

All the accommodation a family needs is built in. However, the "living in a hollow log" syndrome continues with the Austral 24. The optional pop-top would be my choice for extended and regular family cruising.

## Summary

The Austral 24 carries on the Austral family image of quality, performance and comfort — with some reservations about comfort.

Our test boat was in need of tuning and several fittings weren't up to

scratch. The handling and performance did impress.

Accommodation for five is a bit much to ask on a drop-keel yacht of 7.47 m overall because the drop-keel's case takes up so much room. The designer/builder has some ingenious solutions to the accommodation "quart in a pint pot" problem — yet, for families that like to live on board for more than a weekend and race at sea, the obvious answer is a seagoing pop-top if such a thing exists.

## Specifications

Boat . . . Austral 24 built by Austral Yachts Pty. Ltd. 10 Benjamin Street, Newton, 5074, SA. Fibreglass construction.

LOA .....	7.47 m (24'6").
Beam .....	2.36 m (7'8").
Draft ...	0.38 to 1.53 m (1'3" to 5'00").
Ballast .....	446 kg (983 lb).
Sail area — mainsail	13.5 m <sup>2</sup> (145 sq ft),
No. 2 genoa	10.2 m <sup>2</sup> (109 sq ft).
Hull and deck only .....	\$7850.
Sailaway (lock up stage) .....	\$12,500.
Deluxe (as tested) .....	\$16,500.
Tandem trailer .....	\$1850.
Outboard engine extra.	

Test boat supplied by Frank Strange of Austral Yacht Distributors, 21 Graduate Crescent, Mulgrave, 3170, Victoria. ▲