

Blazer 740

By PETER RENDLE

Since reading about the huge fleets of trailer sailers competing in the Marlay Point Overnight Race during the mid eighties (six hundred plus starters one year), I have had an urge to sail the race.

It was therefore, an easy decision when Blazer 740 owner Kevin Farrell invited me to travel down to the beautiful Gippsland Lakes to compete in this year's race. It also gave me the opportunity to review this relative newcomer to the trailer sailer ranks.

Having sailed with Kevin around the buoys on Botany Bay a few times, the chance to spend a few days on board and race among the biggest gathering of TS's in Australia, if not the world, would be as comprehensive a review as one could get.

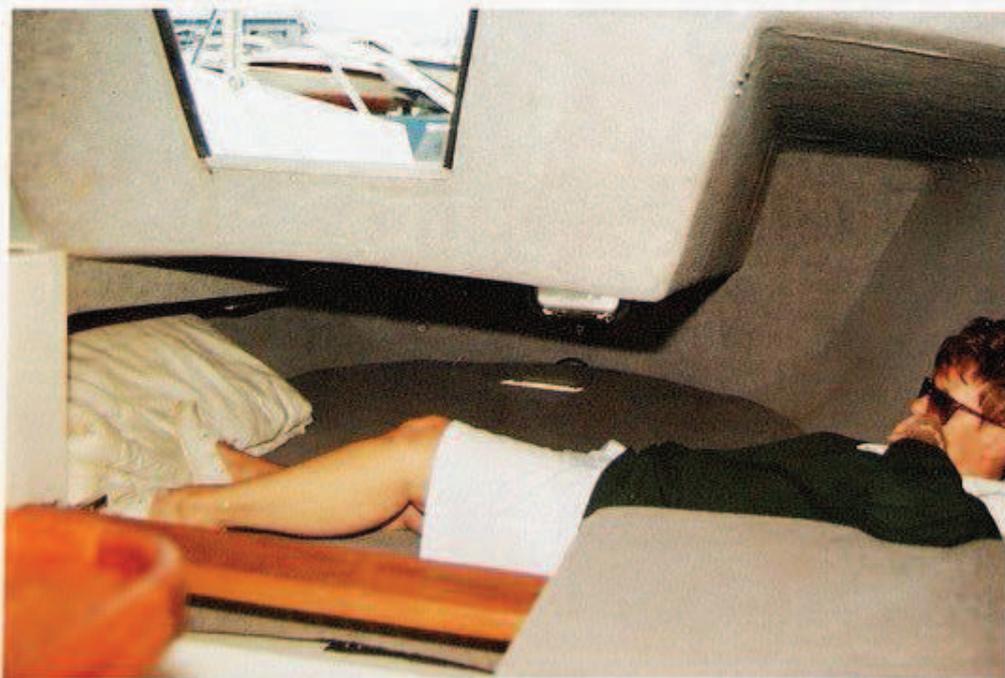
Which ever way you look at the Blazer 740, it is pleasing on the eye. The hull is a development of the earlier Blazer 23, a Doug Peterson design originally commissioned for Hobie Alter who was to manufacture a monohull alongside the famous HobieCat range. However, it never eventuated and it was Australian Tom Stephenson, a good friend of Doug Peterson, who built the mould and went on to build over 50 Blazer 23's in Australia.

The builder of the Blazer 740 is Geoff Reichelt of Seaway fame. Geoff built up the freeboard of the Blazer 23, added a new deck and saloon area, and reshaped the transom. Geof, regarded as one of the best laminators in the business has produced a boat with above average racing performance without sacrificing the space below deck, so important for extended cruising or for overnight family trips.

With a hull weight of around 900kg and allowing 300kg for the trailer, the Blazer 740 is able to be towed by most six cylinder cars and even a powerful four.



Big, easily worked cockpit.



The very large aft bunk.

The cockpit is about as large as you can get in a 7.4m boat and, having raced with up to five adults, there was no problem moving around through the tacks. A locker to starboard runs the full length of the cockpit and can be used for storing gear such as spare anchors ropes or fuel tank. The walk through transom and extended scoop not only provides an excellent bathing and boarding platform but allows you to step straight on board when moored stern to a beach. Great for children or non nautical crew.

The companionway consists of two steps down to a large saloon area. Large because the keel casing is angled forward making it almost totally unobtrusive. The big side tinted windows let in plenty of light but shield some of the heat on a hot day.

Kevin's Blazer does not have a pop top. However, this is an option and can be installed if required.

Domestic considerations are catered for by means of S/S sink, icebox, and two burner stove. Storage is provided in all the normal places, under the berths and cupboards under the sink.

Blazer 740



A good looking, convenient boat.

The fore peak is large enough for at least an adult plus child, two children or two average height adults. Thick cushions form the basis of seating and berths. During our trip south I slept in the forepeak and enjoyed a very comfortable night. It was possible to open the forward hatch and gaze up into a skyful of stars. Great for fresh air fiends.

Further accommodation is made up of a full length berth to starboard and a child's berth to port in the saloon and then right aft is the biggest double berth I've seen in any trailer sailer! Taking up the full beam it stretches from below the companionway steps, which are removed for access, to the transom. Three adults could sleep comfortable in the aft position whilst couples would probably prefer to take advantage of the beam and sleep beam on. Whatever the choice, there would still be space to stow extra gear.



Becalmed.

Kevin Farrell has finished his 740 off himself. The interior bulkheads are carpeted with good quality grey front runner. Not my choice but economical and effective. Structurally the boat appeared very sound with plenty of glass where it's needed. The internal furniture is one complete unit dropped into place before the deck mould is added. This gives the boat added rigidity and strength.

The below deck layout has been carefully thought out to utilise space as efficiently as possible and the standard layout will suit most needs. It should be mentioned that the review model did not have an enclosed head. Kevin favouring a Porta-Potti located against the forward bulkhead with a modesty curtain arrangement. A self contained head is an option.

The performance of the Blazer 23 is legendary and the same slippery hull shape

lends itself to the Blazer 740. The tall rig and bulb keel gives the Blazer a sparkling turn of speed. Nevertheless, Kevin believes that the bulb may effect down wind speed and the later 740's will have a blade keel which will be deeper to make up for the loss of ballast. This means that when re-traced the keel will project some 18 inches above the deck but since this is in front of the mast, it causes no problems with lifting or dropping the spar.

Whilst the Blazer was not intended to burn off the likes of the Young 780, Ross 780 and Spider 28 style yachts the 740 gives a good account of itself in that company and it is definitely at the top of the new cruising style performance TS's. In fact, during the Marlay Point, we beat many of the speed machines and, while some will argue that this year's conditions did not favour the flat out racers, many were surprised at the light air and full on speed we generated.

The fully battened main and headsail are easily managed from the cockpit where all sail controls lead. The tiller is responsive and the rig easy to tune with the aid of the backstay, forestay and traveller. Pointing ability is as good as any other trailerable and when reaching we were really flying.

Husband and wife crews would find the 740 well within their grasp and families will appreciate the comfortable ride. A feature which appealed to me was the cross over jib sheets which tail around the windward winch located on top of the coach house. It means that the head sail can be adjusted from the windward position negating the need to crawl down to leeward in a blow to free up or harden on.

Since Kevin took delivery of 'Double Breasted' he has continually fine tuned the gear to a point where he can now offer potential and future owners advice on rig

Blazer 740



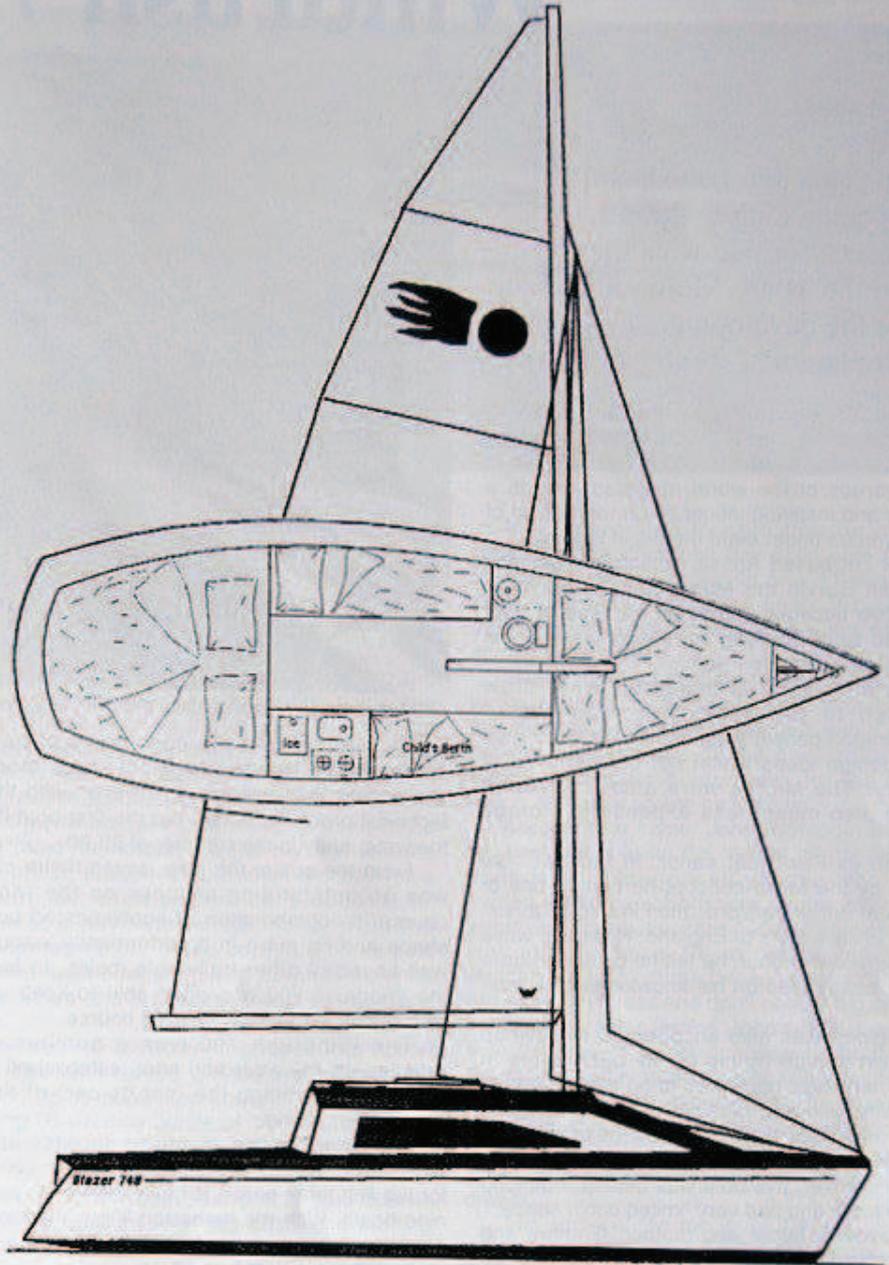
Workable galley.

tension and block positions. When he's not racing, he cruises with his wife and two very young children. He's even considering entering the family in the Non-Spinnaker Division of the TYA Series!

I found the 740 a delight to sail. After starting about ninth last, due to a miscalculation on the final run to the start of the Marlay Point Race, we overhauled some 320 other starters over the ensuing 15 hours most of which had started between 1.5-2.5 hours before us, while only a couple managed to pass us. A true test of performance it certainly raised a few eyebrows.

We slept four adults in complete comfort and the twelve hour tow was a doddle. One negative was the lack of a toe rail and with well rounded gunwhales the opportunity to slip under the guard rails was always a possibility. I am assured teak toe rails will be fitted in future.

Glass Yachts will build the yacht to almost any stage and Kevin Farrell, the NSW dealer



The "loo" at the forward end of the saloon can be screened off and covered.

will supply it, fully finished, for under \$32,000. This price does not include the 4HP outboard. In today's economic climate the Blazer represents excellent value for money. Further details from Glass Yachts of Queensland, 25 Pinetree Court, Mudgeeraba, 4213 PH: and FX: (075) 302 642.

BLAZER 740 SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 7.43m
 Beam: 2.44m
 Displacement: 950kg app.
 Mainsail: 15.6 sq.m
 Largest Genoa: 12.4 sq.m
 Spinnaker large: 52 sq.m
 Spinnaker small: 40 sq.m
 I: 7.85m
 P: 8.85m
 F: 3.50m
 Mast Height: 9.64m above deck
 Headroom: about 5ft. 4 inches (162 cm)

**Gun race boat
of the '80s gets a
bigger cabin for
'90s-style family
cruising and
regatta
accommodation.**

James Hill tells

CHARLES Darwin had it right when he said survival is a matter of successful evolution. It's evident not only in the jungle but also with trailer sailers, where good designs evolve into better ones and the commercial duds are destined for extinction.

First there was the Hartley TS16, then a steady period of development as designers and builders tried to extract more speed, room, lightness or dollar value out of the original concept. Today, the process continues with some interesting twists and turns in the quest to catch that elusive animal called the "new boat buyer".

One Queensland design is winning buyer support by taking a few paces back from the 'gung ho' race market. Called the Blazer 740, it's a direct descendant of the 1980 model Blazer 23 which for many years was the terror of the trailer sailer race circuit. The low and lightly ballasted 23-footer is still a good boat for someone looking for a second-hand, entry-level speedster — only last year one cleaned up the windy Victorian TY titles at Geelong — but it has long since lost its market appeal to newer quickies. This explains its '90s transformation to something more approaching a family cruiser/racer.

TRAIL BLAZER

TEST: BLAZER 740



the foretriangle sports bigger genoas and the rig is higher due to the cabin.

Of course, you can't have your cake and eat it too, and the disadvantages of these changes are both a substantially heavier boat for trailering and less potent performance. The dry hull weight is around the one tonne mark and the total towing weight has increased to around the 1400kg mark. However as maxis go, the Blazer is still quite light and can be easily towed by a 4WD or a V8 family car.

PERFORMANCE

Recently, I was able to join NSW agent Kevin Farrell for a mid-week spin around Botany Bay in his own Blazer 740, called Double Breasted. Having sailed the first of the Blazers, I was particularly keen to see how their re-build had affected the design. I realised the boat would not be as fast, but I sincerely hoped that something of the old Blazer performance sparkle would

remain.

As it turned out, I wasn't to be disappointed. The new Blazer might have an altogether different cut to the old racer, yet it's not so much slower that it can't compete successfully on the race track.

The Blazer now carries a 310kg "bomb" on the bottom of its retractable daggerboard which has greatly improved the boat's stability. However, I noticed that the boat is still a bit sensitive to wind pressure upwind and could only carry its smallest genoa in the conditions.

Kevin says he finds the 120% genoa suits virtually all wind ranges and the optional 150% would only be of value in very light winds. I wasn't surprised by

Because of his experience of building the well-known Seaway 787s, builder Geoff Reichelt saw the benefit of heading the Blazer down the family trail. He'd had a good run out of the boat as a racer and now saw its potential as a conversion to a cruiser/racer. The new 740 is quite a different boat to the old red-blooded Blazer, with much higher freeboard as well as a more voluminous and higher trunk cabin. Where the predecessor was not much more than a glorified day-sailer, the new boat is one of the roomiest boats on the market.

The rig is the only part that looks vaguely similar — it's the same fractional geometry and there is the same Blazer insignia. However, now



The 740's hull extensions haven't affected the powerful and efficient underwater form — it still carves the brine like a knife in hot butter and planes off the breeze!

this statement because the original rig was designed around the Olympic Soling rig which has a small, non-overlap jib.

As with most of the longer and narrower trailer yachts, the Blazer heels fairly easily until the bulb ballast starts to give stability. The hull maintains good speed through the water because it's not that beamy to begin with, and gets some lift effect from its almost flat topsides.

It was a top sailing day with a nor'easterly of around 12 to 14 knots. Upwind we were pulling around 5.7 knots, a pretty respectable speed for a boat of this waterline and sailing with a pair of battle-worn Dacron sails. The boat was also fitted with a somewhat heavier mast section (untapered) than is usual these days so one could only surmise how much better it would go with a modern, tapered race spar and mylar/kevlar race sails.

Downwind the Blazer still retains a lot of the old speed sparkle. Having sailed a few miles up the bay, I pulled the bows away for a quick two-sail

reach, before squaring away for a spinnaker run down the bay. When two-sail reaching, you could feel the Blazer kick into gear as it sat upright and started to accelerate into early plane mode. This was more like the old Blazer and it got better as Kevin and John popped the tri-radial spinnaker

"It represents good value for money when times are tight and people are looking to get on the water inexpensively"

from its deck launcher.

The kite filled virtually immediately as we had the brace already squared back and the sheet hand quick on the winch. With the nor'easterly filling in more strongly from behind we started to shoot the waves and move into that pleasant state of being where the hull breaks free and the crew's spirits soar with every extra knot of speed ... around 10 knots and in full control.

This was one of those days you feel

you could sail on forever. We weren't racing, just sailing for speed and enjoying having the bay to ourselves. We could even see the sandy bottom as we zoomed back downwind through a series of easy jibes to keep within the channel and the stronger incoming tide.

After a quick reach, we doused the spinnaker in seconds by throwing the halyard and pulling the rip-cord line which pulled the sail into its deck sock like a magician's handkerchief. The spinnaker system has a deck chute, the mouth of which is a stainless steel loop attached to the bow pulpit. To further facilitate quick spinnaker sets, the pole is also carried in loops on the boom with the topping lift/kicker permanently attached. Having the chute launcher also means the spinnaker is always ready to go, no matter what jibe you are on.

From a sail handling point of view, the Blazer benefits considerably by having a relatively big cockpit with nice wide, open side decks which are free of coamings. The side decks might be a bit narrow around the cabin sides, but, in the cockpit, there is plenty of room for the helmsman and the two other crew which you'd normally carry on a boat this size.

I also like the way the mainsheet traveller is on the cockpit floor where it



stays out of the way and keeps the whole area nice and open for cruising. The cut-out transom and the stern scoop also make for a perfect landing pad for swimming and boarding from a beach.

Following the latest fashion, the Blazer has the sheet winches headsail tracks up on the cabin top where they are easy to work and to adjust. The height of the cabin brings the two Arco sheet winches up to a very comfortable level for winching. The starboard winch is a two-speed Arco 20 so it can double as the winch for hauling up the centreboard. The port winch is an Arco 8, single-speed which is more than ample to handle headsails and spinnaker braces.

A bank of Ronstan rope clutches are mounted ahead of the winches to take care of the halyards and the centreboard hoist. However, Kevin is about to replace them with the special Spinlock type to cater for the kevlar halyards he is now fitting to the boat. Conventional clutch jammers have trouble holding these ropes because they have virtually no give and are very slippery.

The Blazer also features a very simple and user-friendly rig which has the swept spreaders and lowers separated so you can sheet the genoas inboard of the shroud base. While it's a fairly basic rig there are also some tuning possibilities due to use of an adjustable backstay and floating 8:1 tackle on the

forestay. The latter is neatly tucked away inside the roomy foredeck anchor locker.

Another good feature of the rig is the fully-battened mainsail and headsail. Having the sails fully battened not only improves shape and performance, but allows the crew members to simply roll the sails up when they are finished sailing.

From a trailing point of view the Blazer scores top points for being a quite simple and fuss-free boat to de-rig. This is largely due to the lift-centreboard case running at an angle so it exits ahead of the mast. The board therefore doesn't interfere with the mast lower/raising process so you don't have to be pulling it up and down at the ramp as you have to do on many lift-keelers.

ACCOMMODATION

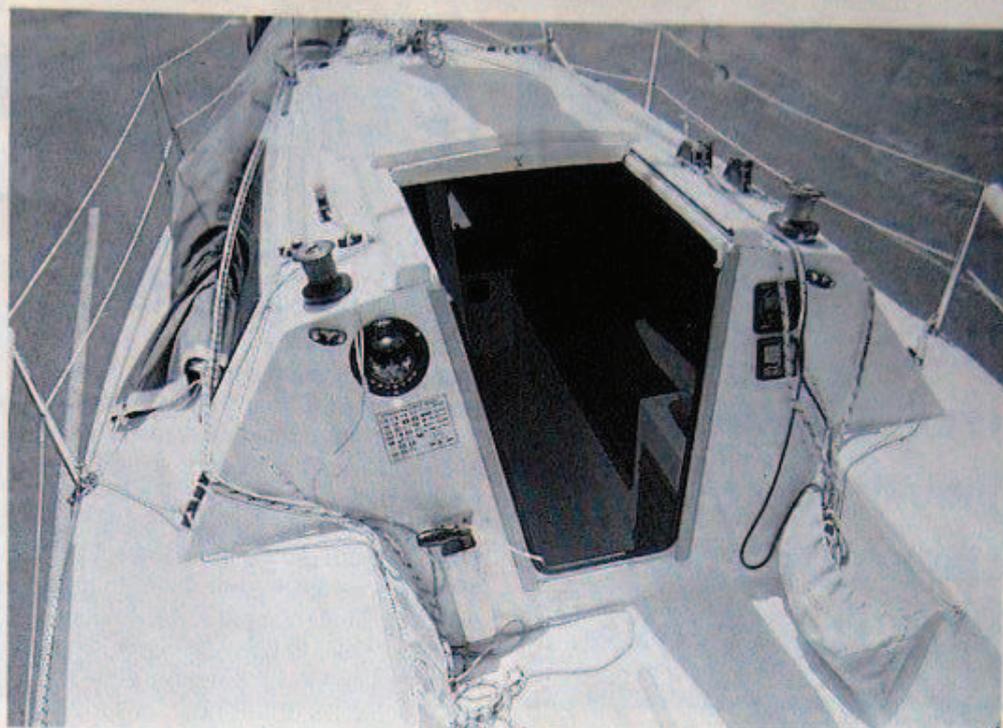
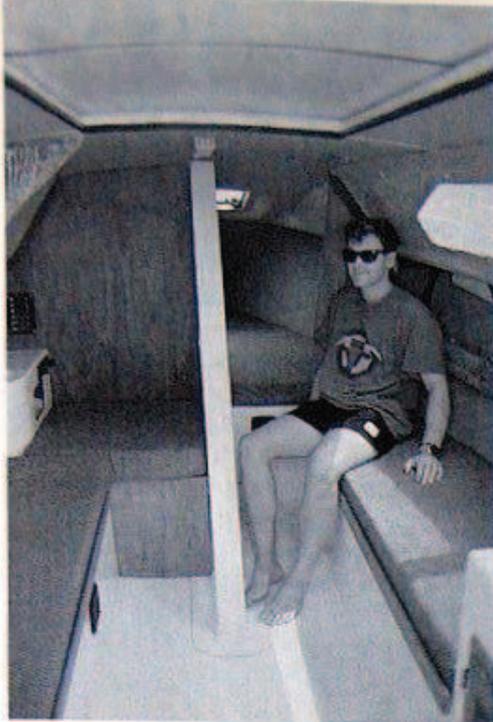
The Blazer 740 will score top points with family buyers for its accommodation. The cabin has a ceiling height of 1.65m and is more spacious than any other boat in this size range. Having the centreboard well for'ard means the main cabin area is very open and enjoyable for cruising.

The accommodation plan will suit the cruising sailor who likes to go away for a week at a time. There's a huge double berth under the cockpit and a semi-enclosed double berth in the fore cabin ahead of the main bulkhead and centreboard. A full length settee berth is on the portside of the saloon and a shorter settee is to starboard. The aft edge of the centreboard can be used to fit an optional folding table and there is seating for up to six people in this area — great for regatta parties.

The test boat had the chemical toilet located on the portside of the centreboard in the main saloon, with a privacy curtain coming across to screen off this area and the for'ard berth. This seemed quite a practical arrangement for a family boat, yet for those who might want more privacy the factory can enclose the loo so you enter it from around the front of the centreboard.

As part of the full interior furniture mould, there is also a galley unit to starboard of the companion way with a good sized icebox, sink, recessed space for a two-burner stove and a bench locker with a teak door and cutlery space in the full-length shelf lockers, which also act as cabin backrests.

The big aft berth is great for parents. It's wide enough to sleep the largest of adults and has a transom cabin port aft to keep the area well lit and ventilated. With three and a half other berths there



Opposite page: Planing board doubles as a useful boarding step, gets the rudder further aft for greater bite. Spinnaker launcher, though unsightly, greatly simplifies kite handling. Tow weight is in the realms of a 6cyl family car.

This page: The benefits of extra freeboard and cabin height can be appreciated when sitting below. Following the keep-it-simple principle, all control lines, including the headsail sheets, lead aft to a pair of Arco 20 winches atop the coachroof.

is plenty of room for the rest of the tribe, or for adult crews when doing an overnight Malay Point race, for example.

Whereas the owner-finish on the test boat's interior somewhat lacked the polish of the factory model, it did give a reasonable idea of what you would be buying. The cabin has a one-piece moulded floor and bunk unit, frontrunner carpet liner and a flow-coated deckhead with teak trim around the bunk edges and galley unit. Kevin had added carpet to the deckhead as well, but admitted that it didn't look quite as good as a flow-coat finish.

If the interior had a failing it would be lack of cabin locker space, but given the camper-sailer nature of trailer sailing, I doubt if this really matters. With TSs you tend to pull all the gear off when you're not cruising and lockers only encourage accumulation of unwanted weight. Still, there's a useful sail locker under the starboard cockpit seat which is big enough to take all the sails you're likely to carry. This locker has a sealed bottom so you can use it to dump wet sails and ropes and thus keep

the cabin dry.

The cockpit also has self-draining recesses for the gas bottle and the outboard fuel tank. The outboard bracket attaches to the starboard side of the bracket rudder and is easily reached from the helm.

Kevin is very happy with the boat. He says it is roomier than any of his previous boats which have included a Careel 22, J24 and a MASRM 720. The extra room has proven useful for family cruising, and he and his wife and two young children have done a number of cruises in the past year, including a long cruise at Christmas on the Myall Lakes.

SUMMARY

The Blazer is one of the best value maxi TSs on the market today. It can be purchased for as little as \$31,892 in a fully-fitted, sailaway form. This price includes teak trim, two working sails and lifelines, and extras like cushions, cabin lights, outboard bracket, stove, portable loo, water tank, sink and pump and frontrunner carpet.

A factory-supplied trailer adds another \$2576, a suitable outboard

would cost around \$1500 and a full spinnaker kit and extra headsails adds another \$2231, bringing the full package to around \$38,000.

The boat is also available at various stages of completion, starting with a basic set of mouldings for around \$12,000, so an owner could well put the boat together for around \$25,000 or so with a trailer. Either way, the Blazer represents pretty good value for money when times are tight and people are looking to get on the water inexpensively.

Most pleasing, the budget price is not reflected in the construction. The builder has long experience with TSs and has done a good job to ensure this boat is solidly built and likely to give good long-term service. The glass is doubled up in all the key stress areas and end grain balsa, rather than foam, is used in the bottom to ensure strength for trailing.

BLAZER 740

LOA:	7.4 m
BEAM:	2.44 m
DRY WEIGHT:	950 1000kg
TARE WEIGHT:	1400kg (approx.)
BALLAST:	340kg
SAIL AREAS:	
mainsail:	15.6 sq m
150% genoa:	12.4 sq m
No 1 spinnaker:	52 sq m
No 2 spinnaker:	40 sq m

MAST HEIGHT: 9.6m
 CABIN HEADROOM: 5ft 5in (165cm)
 MANUFACTURER: Glass Yachts
 Queensland, phone (075) 304 544.
 Test Boat supplied by NSW Blazer agent
 Kevin Farrell, phone (02) 796 7699.