

MASRM top racing machine with comforts of fine cruising boat

By PETER DABBS

You might well ask where such a name as MASRM originated. The answer is simple.

The boat is manufactured by its designer, Merv Anderson of Sandgate Road Marine. Take the first letters of each, and you have MASRM.

With no dealer network, all boats are sold through Sandgate Road Marine in Brisbane, which made it a little difficult for us in Sydney to find a boat to try out. However Keith Powell, who owns a MASRM, very kindly made himself and his boat available to us.

He trailed it to Bayview on Sydney's Pittwater, and the first impressions were of a very full-bodied hull with deep bilges, fine entry running back to fairly flat after section.

It was a shallow skeg which we found helped in her tracking ability. All told, the boat looked to be very powerful although retaining a limited wetted surface.

She is a lift keeler with the top of the keel protruding about 18" above the cabin top when fully raised. The raising is by mechanical winch that has sufficient mechanical advantage to make the lifting of the 240kg of lead ballast a simple task.

The rudder too is of the dagger board type, set in a solid aluminium framework. The cabin is of a wedge shape configuration, and overall the appearance was very pleasing.

I felt that the fairness could have been a little better.



Getting ready

Keith was accompanied by his young son, Tony, and the two of them showed that raising the mast and preparing to sail was not a big job. Although the boat was completely stripped when they arrived, it took very little time.

The trailer had a coupling with anti-sway and anti-pitch device that Keith says has been most successful, allowing him to tow at high speed without any tendency for the trailer to take charge.

This is particularly important to Keith as he races his boat at Lake Macquarie, about 100 miles north of Sydney - a long trip if the trailer is not well set up. And his record there is enviable. His MASRM is scratch boat and, to date is undefeated for line honours.

That is hardly surprising as all MASRMs have full racing gear as standard fittings. Although a comfortable boat for a family cruising, racing is what the class is all about.

They are inclined to be a little tender and should carry a crew of four, all sitting on deck to windward. This is not Keith's idea of sailing.

He and Tony comprise the full racing crew and, to compensate for the light weight, he has



Boat is well set up, making it simple to fly a spinnaker with minimum crew.

Recently one of this new Queens-land breed of TS cleaned up the Junior Cliftshire Racing Championship, sailed off Sydney and other ones have been taking quite a bit of steam in events around Brisbane.

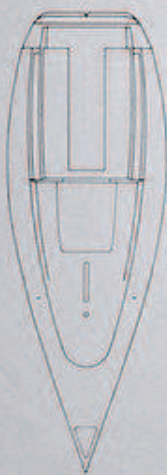
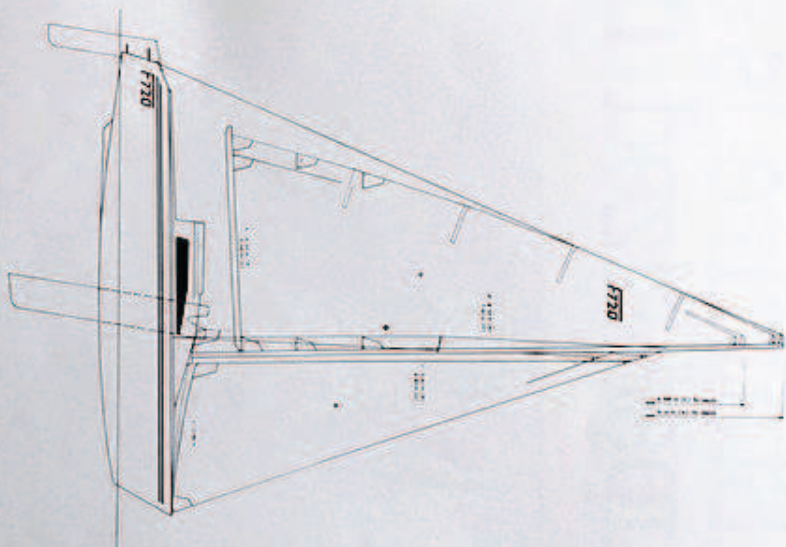
Officially this new hotclass production TS is called the Formula 720, which gives clear enough indication that it's 72 inches long, a nice handy size for a trailer trailer. However people keep referring to it as the MASRAM, which makes it sound like some new breed of sheep, or somebody's idea of what a sports car should be called. MASRAM actually stands for Merv Anderson, Saragat Road Marine.

Mr. Anderson turns out to be an established builder who has been turning out commercial craft and small sailing craft, such as the Olympic Finns, for 20 years at the above address. As a keen sailor, especially of trailer sailers, Mr. Anderson has been building and racing other people's boats for years. It is only now with the MASTRAM that he has put his own knowledge and skills into a racing boat design.

Meyer was happy enough to keep out of the design lull during the trailer sales boom period, but by the 1980s he began to feel frustrated with the lack of development in new trailer sales designs.

With the Formula 720, Merv set out to achieve several objectives. He wanted a medium-sized boat which would suit the majority of his buyers, and he also wanted an outstandingly fast performer. The third objective was to make the boat light enough to allow an excellent performance and yet still be easy to

From all accounts the Formula 720 has met the above requirements admirably. By building both the full and also as 1/3 ton-converted models, Mercury was able to significantly lower the weight of this 7.2 metre (23 ft 8 in). The total weights around 560 kgs dry on the



trailer compared to double that weight for most TS's of this size.

While it is a fully foam-cored boat, the Formula 720 is not particularly expensive for its size, selling from \$8,500 as a basic set of moldings and up to \$16,000 for a basic sail-away boat. According to Merv the secret in keeping costs down is in having the boat hand-laid-up with Swedish divinacell con-

placement with a deep *torison* unusually flat underbody and a nicely ruffled in transom. The side profile of the boat is not unlike a cross between the Gary Hall designed Soriana 8 and 6.7 metre racing 15s although the stem is not as wide as the Soriana 8.

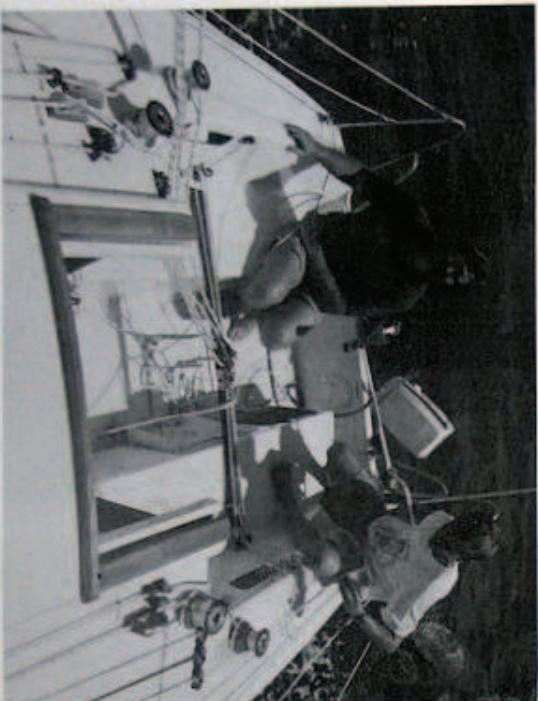
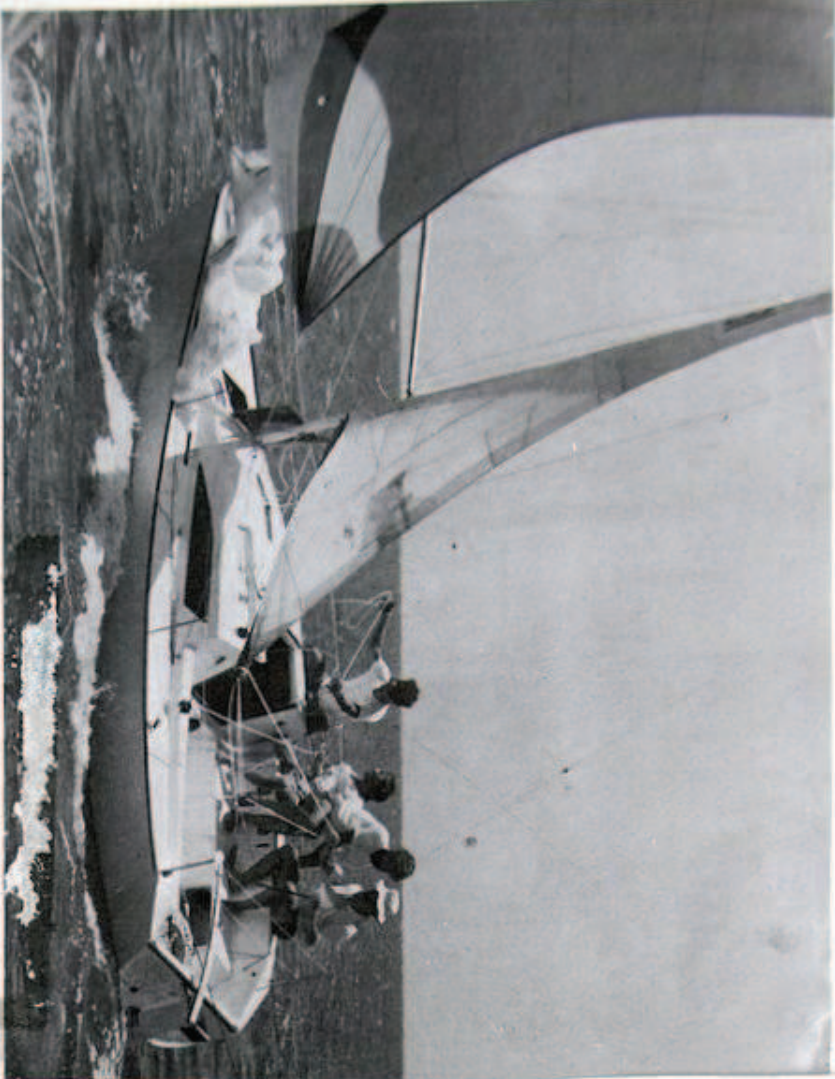
The overall style of the Formula 720 is one of balanced proportions. The hull lines are similar to the new breed of European offshore level racers, rather than the big-dingy style of boats like the Ross and the Farris.

The Formula 720 features a vertical lift centreboard which carries all the ballast. The interior is simply arranged around the centrecase with a double forward berth, galley unit to port and two long quarter berths extending far enough into the cabin to form settees. The boat is sold with the choice of a shorter cruising rig and a taller racing rig.

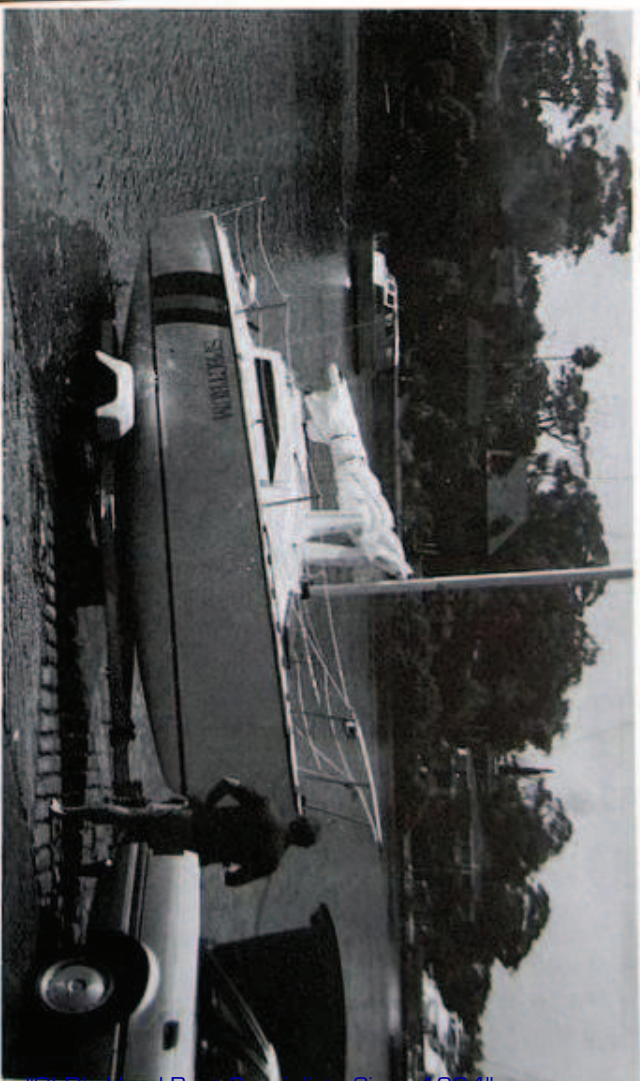
There is already a one-design class association formed around the Formula 720 called the Formula 720 Yacht Club. This club has strict one-design racing rules for both rig versions of the boat and in future will run division races. The club will also accept other designs in its racing to help foster trailer sailing in south-east Queensland.

The cruising rig version of the boat is standard for sale for \$16,000 ex-dockyard while the racing boat with its big-eye headsail and main plus tapered spinnaker and runners starts from \$19,000 ex-dockyard. Both versions feature a pop-top cabin roof hatch, self-draining cockpit with transom planing boards which act as a handy step when boarding the boat while it's on the trail-

Most of the 20 Formula 720s built so far have been basic moulding kit boats and so a national championship has been deferred until next year. A



All halyards and control lines lead aft to winches and cleats on the cabin top



Ample headroom

There is a sliding hatch at the companionway. This hatch is set in a large area of pop-top which gives excellent headroom throughout the usable area of the cabin.

The cockpit is "T"-shaped and is proportioned, with just the right distance between the seats to allow for comfortable bracing. A low coaming also gives a good seating position when sitting on deck to windward. There are lockers at the aft end of both cockpit seats.

She carries a 1/4" rig with the mast positioned over a bracket attached to the leading edge of the keel case. This did not impress me. Although it apparently has given no trouble, it would worry me in a pounding sea.

The mast is held by forelay, cap shrouds and a pair of lowers on swept-back sprakers. The backstay is tensioned by a block and tackle system.

The main is fully battened and loose locked with minimal control lines. These and all halyards lead back to winches and jammers on the cabin top. There are bowlines for the spraker gear as standard fittings.

We set out under outboard power and went looking for some wind. This was no simple matter, and we almost gave up before a light north-easter came in and gradually built up to about 12 knots. These are the conditions that suit the MASRM best, and we were soon working to windward at a good six knots.

She pointed exceptionally well. Keith says that it is his pointing ability that gives him the edge on a windward leg. Even with these light winds, there was noticeable weather helm, and I would expect to play the traveler to get top performance.

Not so tender

On a reach, she picked up her skirts and sailed fast for the conditions. Although Keith said that

she was tender, it was not as tender as many boats of her size that I have sailed, and with due attention to the traveler it should not prove too difficult to keep her at an optimum angle of heel.

We put her through all points of sailing and she acquitted herself with distinction, being just a touch "stiff" in the 90 degree keel and Tony set the spraker with a minimum of trouble, and we headed for home with a dry breeze.

She tracked well in the light air and there was nothing to indicate that she would do otherwise in heavy conditions.

To sum up, I would say she is a top racing machine that has all the comforts to make her a fine cruising boat. Her fine entry, moderate topends and well distributed weight should make her comfortable in a seaway.

Her performance in the JCG classes has shown that she has the ability to maintain her qualities in open water. Thank you Keith for a pleasant sail.

MASRM SPECIFICATIONS:

LOA: 7.2m
LWL: 6.3m
Beam: 2.49m
Ballast: 240kg
Sail area: 30sqm
Designer: Merv Anderson
Available from: Sandgate Road Marine,
30 Alworth Street, Northgate, 4013, Ph
(07) 266 2786.



Hull is full locked with fine entry and fairly flat aft section