



# NOELEX, NO LESS

**South Australian builder has given 12-year-old Noelex 25 a new lease on life, with a new interior and smart construction. It will be the toast of all owners, says BARRY TRANTER.**

**A**UCKLAND boatbuilder Steve Marten is a pretty smart guy when it comes to fibreglass. Developer of the world's fastest 470 dinghies, he became one of the pioneers of the pre-wet laminating technique used with success in NZ's three 12-Metres, Michael Fay's mighty K-Boat, and a series of big custom hulls since then.

One of the Marten's early success stories was the Noelex 25 trailer sailer. He had bought the Noelex 22, one of NZ's most popular classes, and in 1977 decided he needed a 25-footer. With the aid of Alex Tretheway, the 22's designer, the 25 was born. The Noelex 25 was to become an object lesson to all boatbuilders and designers. The design was clever, the styling timeless, and smart construction techniques have kept it current.

In '87 NZ virtually lost Australia as an export market due to currency fluctuations, and hard times locally dried up the production boat market too. And Marten had bigger things on his mind — 130-footers, for instance — so the South Australian Noelex distributor, Maurie Perry, bought the moulds in September '87,

although the first local boat wasn't produced until May '88. At the time I wrote this, Maurie was building his 40th boat, taking the class total beyond the 450 mark.

Perry's Noelex Yachts factory is at Goolwa, a village on the shores of the Goolwa River which is really an arm of Lake Alexandrina, the stretch of water into which the Murray River discharges after its long journey down through the hinterland. Goolwa is not far from the Murray mouth, but one of four barrages prevents access to the sea. The barrages are a system of lifting gates which keep the salt water from flowing into the freshwater lake system. Goolwa is TS heaven; beyond is a series of low-lying islands, shallow lakes with plenty of wildlife, a cruising ground that extends down to behind the Coorong, the dune area immortalised in the Storm Boy book and film.

The factory, by the way, has one of the best moulding shops we've ever seen — heated, sealed, clean, and based on the Marten operation in Auckland.

The hull is stiffened with Coremat in the bottom (to just above the waterline) and deck, while the topsides are solid 'glass.

Despite an extensive fitout including plenty of wood trim, the Noelex displaces 1180kg; towing weight of the deluxe version is 1780kg. Not featherlight by current standards, these are still good figures for such a stylish, comfortable craft. The deckliner moulding is vacuum-bagged to the deck moulding, with filler between the two skins. The hull also has quite a long, shallow keel of solid 'glass, which takes the trailing loads.

The designers gave this 7.77m by 2.50m hull a drop keel which draws 1.4m fully extended. The keel case reaches only half height in the cabin, although its leading edge is carried up to the roofline to help support the mast. The keel is lifted by a winch handle set in the top edge of the case, so the winding action is horizontal. The short keel case means the interior is not bisected by a keel structure, restricting movement around the cabin, and cutting down the light. All the ballast in the form of lead ingots — is in the fibreglass-skinned keel, which is stiffened by a full-depth timber spar.

The interior has a lot of clever touches. The forepeak is a proper cabin; two adults can sit here in comfort while avoiding the rain (we did). The large rectangular area



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between the bunks is filled in by the starboard side settee backrest cushion. The portside backrest drops down to convert the settee to a double berth. Sleeping five adults may be a bit cramped; four and a child would be fine.

The toilet is in the forecabin, around the corner behind the half bulkhead and centre case structure. The two-burner Maxi methylated spirits stove sits on a galley moulding which joins the centre case. One of this boat's cleverest features is the slide-out two-compartment icebox fridge, which you draw out from behind the companionway steps. The icebox — the front bin — is 3 cubic feet, the fridge behind is 2 cubic feet. The 12-volt compressor unit



*Tapered Baverstock mast is an easy lift.*

is mounted at the rear of the icebox, and draws power through a cable which remains attached to the unit. You slide out, pull out a few stubbies, slide it back. Maurie Perry claims there have been no failures with this system.

The interior styling alone will sell this boat to many. The full headliner is a fibreglass moulding with a textured finish that is indistinguishable from vinyl. The cushion covers, carpet on the hull sides, and floor carpet were all of berber colours on the test boat, to complement the American Ash trim. Teak is optional but the ash is a knockout. It is a wide-grained timber which must be almost white, the only finish Noelex use is a wax, so it deepens only to a very light honey colour. The overall effect is voguishly natural, and everyone on our test sail loved it. This extensive trimming suits the boat's character, which is that of a small yacht.

The cockpit and hardware are easy to live with, too. The tiller is led through the transom, which cleans up the stern's appearance, and the outboard is mounted in a well in the cockpit floor, below the tiller. Now, in other yachts with this



*Outboard well is below the tiller so the helmsman doesn't fall in. Fuel tank is inside starboard locker; motor head swings forward.*



*A drenched Kerly Corlette searches for a rum and coke in the slide-out fridge. Waxed ash trim and berber cloth is warming.*

arrangement I have been known to fall down the slot, but on the Noelex it didn't seem easy to do. Which is good. You swing the motor head forward, the leg comes inside the boat and you fill the gap in the skin with a moulding, which you wriggle into place with a tubular alloy handle, which then wedges it home. At first sight this seemed a messy arrangement, but you quickly get used to it and it keeps the water out of the boat, dropped objects inside the boat, and the outboard is inboard where you can get at it. It also gets it off the

transom, where it would be unsightly. And that wouldn't do, in such a classy craft.

The rudder stock is a nice alloy moulding, carrying a swinging fibreglass blade and a very nautical teak tiller. The 4:1 mainsheet is attached almost at the boom end, dropping to a traveller that bridges the cockpit thwarts, well clear of the companionway. The traveller lines cam on the traveller car itself, easily handled by the helmsman as he skirts the longish tiller. The self-tacking jib is controlled by the sheets only; there is no outhaul as such for the car,





*With rounded underwater sections, and crew weight inboard, the Noelex is initially tender but soon settles down.*

which runs on a fairly short curved track. Sheer sheet tension pulls the car inboard when headed upwind, ease the sheets and the car slides out to the end of its track.

The rig is a simple single spreader with three shrouds setup, with forestay tension provided by a highfield lever in the anchor locker, a good-sized locker with a trigger fastening bolt. The forehatch is clear with non-skid strips, with drain channels around its perimeter, a reminder of how classy the Noelex mouldings were when we first saw them, and how good they are still.

A clue to the Noelex's character is an obvious one — you reach for the tiller extension and there it ain't. You sit in this TS, not out on the sidedeck. You sit in there with that lovely big tiller and you're the skipper of a yacht not a modern plastic and alloy contraption which you engage in an uncouth wrestling match.

The hull sections are quite rounded underwater, so there's not a terrific amount of initial stiffness, but the Noelex doesn't heel too far before settling down. She tacks

instantly, and is a pleasure to work up a narrow channel in a shifting southerly, as we did while heading back to the ramp at Pittwater's Bayview. There is no lurching or unpredicted change in direction of travel, either. This is not a boat to frighten the unwary, or scare the kids, or petrify the skipper when it attempts to take charge and attack a moored boat or a channel marker.

The Noelex 25 is one boat an owner could not fail to be proud of. It looks right, it sails right, it would be nice to live with. The interior is more than well-trimmed, it has style and it would make the owners happy to cast an eye around their little penthouse afloat.

We borrowed the boat with the help of Sydney Sailboat Centre's Kerly Corlette who reckons that when the buyers of racer TSs arrive to collect their new boat, they hitch it hurriedly to the back of the 4WD and, without even a grunt of farewell, vanish into the night.

New Noelex 25 owners always bring a bottle of champagne. ☺

## SPECIFICATIONS

LOA .....	7.77m
Beam .....	2.50m
Draught	
Board up .....	0.30m
Board down .....	1.40m
Displacement (deluxe) .....	1180kg
Sail area (working) .....	21.37sq m
Spinnaker .....	32.03sq m
Flanker .....	21.08sq m
Towing weight (deluxe) .....	1780kg
Standard equipment (deluxe): Ash or teak trim; table fitted; carpet fitted; trimmed seat cushions; boarding ladder fitted; bow fairlead fitted; extra battery box fitted; two halyards winches	
Price (deluxe) .....	\$40,900
Test boat from: Sydney Sailboat Centre, Mona Vale, 2103.	
Builder: Noelex Yachts Australia Pty. Ltd., PO Box 411, Goolwa, South Australia, 5214. Phone (085) 55 2230.	