

SEAWAY 25

By NEIL BAIRD

One of the best established of the larger trailer yacht classes available in Australia, the Seaway 25 is a real pocket ocean racer and provides an excellent introduction to bigger boat racing for small boat sailors.

As well, the Seaways – particularly in Victoria – provide excellent racing within their own class, and in the many open trailable yacht events in the State.

Developed by builder, Tom Stephenson of Stephenson Sailboats Pty Ltd. in conjunction with designer Doug Peterson of San Diego, the Seaway has been gradually developed over the seven or so years of its life through about three different models.

The most drastic changes have occurred in the last couple of years when Tom Stephenson developed the Elite model which does not alter the performance of the boat, but makes it a more comfortable proposition for cruising.

I recently sailed in the Seaway State Titles in Victoria where an average of 25 boats turned out for each of the six races.

and I also competed in the Marlay Point Overnight Race in which 25 Seaways also competed.

While all of my sailing on a Seaways has been on an Elite, Graham Fenton's 'Nevertheless' I think I prefer the looks of the older models, even though they obviously have less room below and a slightly less effective cockpit layout.

The Elite is undoubtedly likely to sell better, and is the only model now available from new.

As I said earlier, the Seaway is a real little yacht and has many keel boat characteristics. Not the least of these is immense strength and it is notable that a Seaway was involved in the Petersville Series collision that resulted in the sinking of the 31 footer 'Great Expectations'. The Seaway concerned had its pulpits and lifelines demolished, and part of its toe rail



removed, but the hull was undamaged.

Seaways have sailed in all the major races in Victoria in all kinds of weather, and I have heard of no significant problems.

While I would not be keen to sail one to New Zealand, I think that they could be sailed comfortably and safely around the coast.

They have no problem passing the Victorian Trailable Yacht stability screening test, and I have found them to be particularly stable under shy spinnaker in quite strong breezes. This must be a worthwhile test.

The pocket ocean racer approach seems to lead most owners to cover their boats with gear, and my general observation of most boats in the class is that they have too many gadgets, ropes and winches. Certainly, the boat that I sailed on could have had a couple of hundred pounds removed to make it more efficient and faster. I noticed similar accumulations of gear on many of the other boats I looked at.

I guess that most skippers tend to get tempted by the gear suppliers and these have very persuasive arguments for putting their equipment aboard.

Having sailed now under all points of sail and in winds ranging from dead light to approximately 30 knots, I think I have got a reasonable idea of how the boats sail. They certainly perform well for the shape and weight of boat that they are.

There is no doubt that you could make a faster 25 footer, but to combine all the features of the Seaway and still provide the performance that they do would be difficult.

As a racing class in Victoria, they would be second only to the Etehells for numbers of boats sailing regularly, and they certainly provide keen racing at all levels.

At the front of the fleet is competition as good as you would get anywhere, while further back, the families and newcomers gain their experience and have a great deal of fun.

The Class overall seems to have developed a great feeling of camaraderie and there is no doubt that one of the main attributes of Seaway sailing is that all the crews seem to have a lot of fun.

Down below, the standard Seaway has settee berths and quarter berths with a fairly bare forepeak given over to sail stowage, and a Porta Potti. The galley is beside the centreboard case and can really only be used for snacks except when the

On the Elite model, there is a bare forepeak behind which there are two large settee berths either side of a table arrangement which is built around the centreboard case. Aft of the settee berths are a galley to starboard and a chart table to port. Aft again is a very large two-person quarter berth.

There is considerable room in the area at the bottom of the companionway steps, and with two small port lights, as well as the main cabin windows, there is also plenty of light.

It would be an ideal boat for a week or so's cruise for the small family on waters such as Port Phillip or the Gippsland Lakes.

While the boat is a centreboarder, in practice the centreboard is usually left locked down while racing, under trailable yacht rules. It is still a very useful device when racing in places such as the Gippsland Lakes where it is almost impossible not to go aground.

The Seaway is quite easily trailable and can be towed behind ordinary cars such as a Falcon 4.1 litre. For operations in most parts of Victoria, they do not require the towing power of a four wheel drive.

The boat is available in a number of stages, from hull and deck to completely fitted. The fully fitted boat with trailer and sails costs around \$30,000. Savings of a few thousand dollars would be available to anyone prepared to fit out and finish a boat himself.

Secondhand boats are selling in the range of around \$20,000, plus or minus \$4000, depending on fit out and reputation.

They are not particularly cheap, but they are good and their attributes are enough to make the price worthwhile.

SEAWAY 25 ELITE

Principal Dimensions:

L.O.A.: 7.83 m.

Beam: 2.49 m.

Draft: Keel up 0.33 m.

Keel down 1.55 m.

Displacement: 1600 kg.

Ballast: Internal 480 kg.

Keel 180 kg.

Rig: 1 - 7.85 m; J - 7.85 m;

P - 2.58 m; E - 8.23 m.

I.O.R. Rating (est.) 18.5 ft.

Trailer weight: 500 kg.

Designer: Doug Peterson, San

Diego, California.

Builder: Stephenson Sailboats

Pty Ltd, Labradon, Queensland.

test

SEAWAY 787

My first close encounter with the Seaway 25 trailable yacht, sometime quarter-tonner and hot JOG racer was with a boat called *Volcano*. I raced it in mixed races on the Gold Coast Broadwater and in some offshore races out of Moreton Bay.

It is now a few years since I sailed the above boat but the impression remains strong of the Seaway being a stylish, fast and seaworthy little boat. The Seaway, after all, came from the drawing board of internationally famous Doug Peterson who has been responsible for the creation of some of Australia's most pre-eminent ocean racers. One of this country's leading young offshore sailors, Tom Stephens, also had a big hand in the design and its establishment in Australia. You could say the Seaway has a most impressive pedigree.

There have been few boats on the Australian market which have attempted to bridge the gap between inshore trailer sailer and offshore racer. Basically it is difficult to combine both styles, but it has been achieved well in the Seaway 25. A competitive trailable yacht which can rate well under either JOG or IOR, and has room inside to be a reasonable family

New Seaway making waves

Originally created as a quarter-tonner, the Seaway has evolved through several design changes into a better family cruiser.

COLIN METCHER reports.

cruiser, is an attractive proposition.

Many sailors including John Bertrand have cut their teeth on offshore racing and have been attracted to the Seaway. Its popularity is evident in the strong class association in Victoria and the numbers around the country. Many of these owners are keen racing sailors who have been consistently competitive over the years.

When builder Tom Stephenson moved his operation from Victoria to Queensland's Gold Coast, he developed a new

version of the trailer yacht called the Seaway Elite. The Elite shared the same basic rig and hull as the existing design, but had several cruising features especially suited to Queensland waters. The Elite, with a bigger and squarer trunk cabintop, an easily retractable rudder hung on the transom and a large double berth under the cockpit, was designed to make the Seaway attractive to the non-racing market.

As a keen performance sailor, I thought the Elite model lost some of the pleasing





Topside ports are used to brighten up the large under cockpit sleeping area. Rudder is now transom mounted.

aesthetics of the original design, but had more headroom and was better for cruising. The new model had a more open plan interior layout which not only looked more attractive, but proved to be suitable to Australian conditions.

While it never sold as well as the original design, the Elite has multiplied and become the principal model. Late last year the moulds and rights for the Seaway 25 were acquired by two northern NSW coast trailer sailer enthusiasts who had long admired the design. Des Thomson and Eddie Edstein had been in the market to buy new Seaway 25s and when they discovered Tom Stephens was interested in selling the design, they decided to buy the company as well.

Thomson and Edstein who are already successful businessmen, see their forte being sales and marketing, so all construction is sub-contracted to Geoff Reichelt. Continuity of construction has been retained, since Reichelt took over the construction work from Tom Stephenson.

The new owners, trading as Seaway Yachts International, are offering not only the existing Elite but also a new model called the Seaway 787. The new Seaway 787 is an exciting new boat blending the good cruising qualities of the Elite with a new cabin and deck design which improve the look of the boat considerably.

On the eve of this issue I was given the chance to test sail the first model 787 hot out of the mould. The new boat stays within the original class rules by retaining the same hull, lift-keel, rudder shape and sail plan as the first variation of the design.

As with the Elite, the new 787 retains the performance of the original design, provided the boat is not unduly loaded with cruising gear. Trimmed on an equal footing with the Mk I model, the new Mk III is still as fast as the older model which is good news.

The key change in the 787 is the longer and more streamlined cabintop. The new "lid" is approximately 50 cm longer forward and 30 cm wider, but through careful streamlining of the wedge profile and the use of long, one-piece ports the cabin looks sleeker and more modern than the earlier models. Because of the longer trunk cabin the fore hatch is now mounted on the forward face of the cabin for access as well as ventilation. The new lid also has more natural light below from the longer window ports and more room in the saloon area.

As part of a new deck mould several other improvements have been introduced with the new 787, including fuel tank and stowage lockers in the cockpit and an anchor locker in the foredeck area.

Interior space and comfort is now competitive with anything else on the

market in this size including some of the more comfortable Kiwi boats.

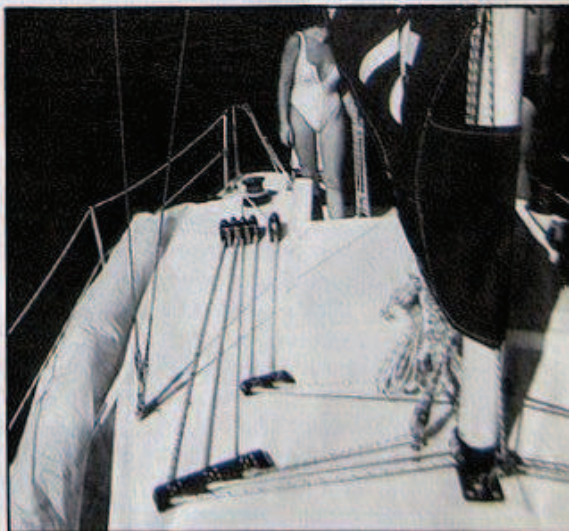
Although there is more fibreglass area in the new lid, the Seaway 787 retains the same dry weight as the Elite. Windage has increased but it does not seem to make any difference in performance compared to the Elite model.

The wider cabintop does have the disadvantage of cutting away one of the boat's great asset: its generous side decks — yet there is still enough width to either walk or sit comfortably. The sideways expansion of the cabin has pushed the genoa tracks out so the angle of the headsail is not as close as in the Elite. The loss of some windward pointing ability will not affect cruising, but the racing enthusiast will probably want to add a tweeker system to force the sheeting angle inboard.

Our test boat was rigged to class rules with tapered mast section and boom by S&H Spars (Gold Coast) and sails by Horizon Sails (Gold Coast). The impressive standing rigging and metal-work on deck was of a high standard. Horizon Sails onboard included a dacron mainsail and a tape-drive mylar genoa.

The test sail lasted several hours within the midweek afternoon club race on the Southport Broadwater. A blustery 15 knot breeze made ideal testing conditions against the rest of the fleet, which included several good contemporary designs such as Young 7.8s. The Seaway design has been extensively tested but this occasion confirmed that the design was still competitive and as quick as its near-sister, the Elite.

We showed a clean transom to the lone Elite racing against us and finished well up in the fleet. The difference was





probably in sails and helmsmanship and, all things equal, either boat could have won in the conditions we sailed. Interestingly it seemed the wider sheeting angle of the 787 did not hurt performance in the test conditions and in this wind range the genoa might need to be sheeted at this angle.

Like the Elite, the 787 has a transom-mounted rudder with a blade which pivots up within the stock. This makes it easier to bring the boat into shallow water than with the original Mk I design, which had a fixed rudder retracted through the cockpit floor when draft needed reducing.

The 787 comes with a weighted dagger keel which lifts vertically in a moulded fibreglass half-height case. The design of the case means it is hardly noticed in the cabin. In fact the case forms a handy drop-leaf saloon table which is much appreciated by a thirsty crew during post-race drinks.

Most Seaways have been built with the lift keel set-up but, for no extra cost, there is the option of having a weighted swing keel, or weighted fixed keel.

The interior of the 787 is exactly the same as the Elite model. There is a good size double-berth under the cockpit, giving mum and dad the chance to sleep aft for a change with more hull width and less motion from waves or wash. There is a compact galley with sink and stove offset to starboard off the main companionway and a chart table with icebox on the opposite side. The saloon consists of two settee berths with the saloon table between, while for'ard behind a curtain is a WC and hand basin.

This interior plan does not fit more than

four sleeping berths below and is not cramped or short on floor space. The interior looks good, is comfortable and it is not too fussy which I think will suit a lot of families down to the ground.

Overall the Seaway 787 will have great appeal for those who want a boat they know they can sail just as happily offshore as inshore. Seaway 25s such as Bert Sherring's *Pineapple* have shown they can tackle offshore races tough enough to see much bigger boats retire and rigs come tumbling down. While the design is no longer state-of-the-art, it still should do well in certain conditions.

One could successfully sail this boat in JOG with an enthusiastic crew. There is no quarter-ton class racing these days but the Seaway fits into the yacht club racing scene very easily. Most trailer sailer-owners though, will only be interested in TYA type inshore events such as the Marlay Point and Tin Can Bay events. For the latter type of racing the Seaway 25 continues to be competitive, particularly with other cruiser/racers of its own kind like the Sonata 26s and the Compass 750.

As standard, the Seaway 787 comes with end-grain balsa-cored deck, a solid hull construction reinforced by a one-piece furniture mould and a massively strong moulded centreboard case which has its own floor reinforcing. This means it doesn't need to go up to the deck to get support. Extra lead is moulded into the bilge area to supplement the lead ballast already in the moulded fibreglass lift-keel.

Seaway Yachts of Lismore are currently offering both models of the Seaway in stages of completion starting

with a stage one structurally complete level. Otherwise a bare set of mouldings for \$9,995 ex-factory. Stage two and three offer two progressive levels of finish, while at the sail-away deluxe stage four, one gets a complete boat for \$27,998. This price includes a galley with water, sink and stove, all electrics, deck hardware and a mainsail and number three headsail (jib). A tandem wheel trailer and an 8hp Evinrude outboard motor adds an extra \$3800 to the price.

While the Seaway 25 falls within the mini-maxi category of trailer yacht, the manufacturers claim the total weight of the boat (1270 kg) is still within the capacity of a six-cylinder car or station wagon. There still must be a check to see if the car/boat combination fits your local state laws on trailing, even if the vehicle is up to the load.

Overall the Seaway 787 is an interesting new addition to the trailer yacht scene, combining a nice balance of size, trailability, performance, racing versatility and competitive pricing.

Specifications

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| Length | 7.87m |
| LWL | 6.45m |
| Beam | 2.49m |
| Draft | 33cm to 152cm |
| Ballast internal | 530kg |
| Ballast keel | 150kg |
| Weight | 1270kg |
| Working sail area | 27m ² |
| Price — Stage 4 Sail-away | \$27,998 |
| Manufacturer/Distributor: Seaway Yachts International c/o PO South Lismore 2480 | |



Above, Seaway 787 features waltz-through transom with outboard mounted on offset transom bracket to help clean up cockpit area.

