

# 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 Seaway 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 Eitchells 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 small galley, a porta potti, a small stove, and a Porta Potti. The galley is beside the centreboard case and can really only be used for snacks except when the boat is at anchor.

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 900 kg.

Designer: Doug Peterson, San

Diego, California.

Builder: Stephenson Sailboats

Pty Ltd, Labrador, Queensland.

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