

LONGER, LIGHTER, FASTER



The Sonata 760 Sport
has grown from its
sibling, the 6.7.

ANDREW NORTON went
racing and put one
through its paces

SINCE its release in early 1987 the Sonata 760 Sports has proved capable of beating not only most trailersailers of under 10 metres LOA downwind but also larger keelboats upwind.

It was developed from the popular Sonata 6.7 and so good is the moulding quality that it's hard to tell that the 760 is an extended version of the former's hull. The accommodation layout from the companionway forward is very similar but the cockpit and rig have been redesigned to utilise the 90cm greater length. There's an inboard well that enables the outboard to be left mounted ready for use; with the plug in place any

drag is virtually eliminated, and an efficient threequarter rig takes full advantage of the longer waterline length.

The combination of a 25 per cent greater working sail area, relocating all the ballast to the vertical drop keel and using Divinycell high density foam sandwich hull and deck lay-up has resulted in a considerably lighter yet stiffer boat that really flies on all points of the wind. And the 760 looks so much better than the 6.7.

One way of judging how well a concept works is to test it in the conditions for which it was designed, in this case club racing, so I gave it a try.

I crewed on Classical Gas, owned by Marvin Heaston of Coal Point on Lake Macquarie, and one of the first current model Sonata 760s built by Glass Tech Industries, probably the most successful fibreglass specialist company in Newcastle.

Sailing

With Marvin, John Porter of Pacific Sailboat Centre and me aboard we set off for a Wednesday afternoon non-spinnaker race held by the Lake

Macquarie Yacht Club, Belmont. The 20 to 25 knot north easterly that blew up late in the afternoon was perfect for testing the 760, particularly because early in the race we had opted for No 1 genoa and were down one on the normal four-person crew.

The course comprised a standard twice round three-leg shape, providing two broad reaches, runs and works. Although it took less than two hours to complete the race showed up strengths and weaknesses in the 760s hull, rig and cockpit design.

Having started well mid-fleet we kept pace on the first leg, a broad reach, by poling out the genny but here the rig needed a spinnaker's boost. Correctly trimmed fore and aft (one crew member forward), however, we accelerated almost instantly in gusts averaging an indicated 7 knots, just on hull speed.

Poled out and running square downwind was a different story. Averaging 7½ knot we touched 8½ several times with the helm remaining light yet positive. The balanced sailplan and hull's almost flat bottom with firm bilges eliminated any rolling, and unless 10 knots is your

Air for one — the Sonata
760 is a real flier





John Porter (LEFT) of
the Pacific Sailboat
Centre and Marvin
Heaston, Classical
Gas' owner



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aim (entirely possible) a spinnaker would be unnecessary. Any water that slopped into the motor well was quickly sucked out by the standard venturi, great for keeping tinnies cool when cruising.

Despite being overcanvassed upwind we gave several of the larger keelboats a very hard time and dunked our gunwales only a handful of times in the gusts, remarkable for a sailboat displacing less than a tonne. When knocked over the rig depowered itself and the helm never needed a savage tug to prevent rounding up. In the steady breezes there was just enough weather helm to give feel without incurring excessive drag and as we sliced through the 60 to 70 cm chop little spray came aboard.

The broad traveller, powerful vang and backstay gave enormous latitude in mainsail fullness control but, surprisingly, the power came from the No 1, which effectively backwinded the main several times. A useful touch was the former's translucent Mylar fabric which enabled us to see boats approaching on what is normally a blind sector.

Being laid right over a few times showed up some flaws that would not take much to correct. It was very difficult to slot in handles on the angled-out sheet winches at large angles of heel and, frankly, the moulded nonskid deck pattern was nowhere near as effective as a nonskid-painted wooden deck. Colouring the white decks and cockpit beige or off-white would have helped reduce the summer sun's glare.

Otherwise the rig and deck/cockpit layout worked extremely well and all running gear proved easy to handle.

The cockpit/motor well design is very clever. Any spray or water reaching the cockpit runs aft through two channels to the well, eliminating pipes and skin fittings which could leak. Large enough to accommodate a longshaft outboard, the inboard location of the well facilitates minor repairs without having to lean over a transom. The test boat's shortshaft Johnson 6, though adequate for Lake Macquarie's conditions, necessitated concentrated crew weight aft for

reasonable propeller immersion and thrust, a drawback not helped by insufficient bracket mount angling-in to enable setting the motor perpendicularly. An angle of 10 or 11° would make a difference.

Ahead of the well, which is flanked either side by a sealed-off compartment with a nonskid flat surface above, are two cockpit lockers, à la 6.7, for fuel, tools, spare ropes, etc.

The 290kg drop keel is lowered through a slot running from hull bottom to cabin top and is raised by a tackle cradle that hinges down to prevent snagging the boom vang. Because Classical Gas is left afloat most of the time (using International's Hard Racing White antifouling to control scum), Marvin leaves the keel down far enough to increase stability without immersing the lifting tackle pulley. A locking pin holds the keel fully down to maintain optimum righting force in the event of a knockdown.

Access forward and anchoring are simplified by relatively wide sidedecks, strongly backed mooring cleat, bow roller and side-hinged anchor locker. The aft-hinged forehatch has security bars in case it's accidentally stood on.

A nice touch is the smoked perspex companion hatch inside the poptop.

The latter provides full standing headroom when erected though stronger struts wouldn't go amiss. Also the narrow bridgedeck's forward end lip should be capped to reduce chafe in this high-traffic area.

Accommodation

The 760 is virtually the same below as the 6.7 except for an inconspicuous sub-bulkhead to take the chainplates, and a neat galley table that slots into a short pipe either side of the keel case. The hull bottom under the sole of the furniture liner is now 15 to 16mm fibreglass/Divinycell sandwich instead of 11 mm glass, resulting in a lighter but stronger hull.

So thoroughly has the 6.7 been transformed into the 760 that it will surely gain in popularity over the smaller boat. ☺

SONATA 760 SPORTS

LOA.....	7.6m
LWL.....	6.2m
Beam.....	2.5m
Draft.....	1.55/0.2m
Displacement.....	900kg
Ballast.....	290kg
Working sail area.....	28.5m ²
GIO insurance premium	\$439.59
Distributed by Pacific Sailboat Centre, Newcastle, (049) 54-4255	

