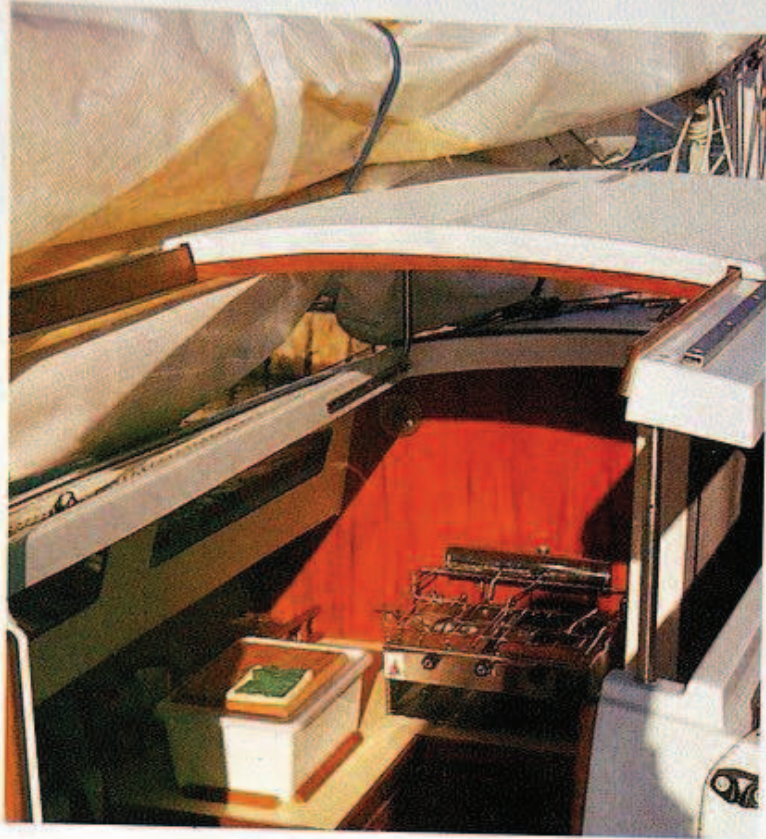


# DADDY LONG LEGS

One of the longer trailer sailers, the Spider 28 has pace to race and space for the family. Story and photographs by MARK ROTHFIELD





Top left: Simple but strong pop top lets ample light into the cabin at rest, but should be lowered when sailing. Above: with four on the gunwale and mainsail reefed the 'VMG' was high. The rudder has worked its way up.



## DADDY LONG LEGS

I ARRIVED at the marina late and frazzled after yet another altercation with Sydney's traffic to find the test boat, a new Spider 28, lying slack at its berth, the sails ready to bend on and the crew lolling in the sunlight. Apologetic but still very dark about the imbecile who'd turned right without indicating, I climbed aboard and we motored out.

The exotic main and storm jib from Southside sails crackled in the building breeze. We killed the Mariner then turned downwind and all became blissfully peaceful. The open transom left its stern wave behind as the big Spider began to plane effortlessly.

"Let's set the kite," Sydney Sailboat Centre's Kerly Corlette suggested after a few minutes, then ventured for'ard. With the pole and braces set, the spinnaker billowed from a large bag clipped inside the companionway and snapped open under the burden of 20 knots from the sou'west. The trailer sailer accelerated to about 14 knots, surfing like a skiff while remaining perfectly mannered.

We gybed, heeling only slightly as the boom crossed, and shyed up for a broad reach into a sheltered bay. The skipper handed me the tiller extension — it was alive with the speed, heavy but responsive — and my senses were thrilled by the sheer power and performance. Nothing helps you forget about traffic congestion faster than a high-performance trailer sailer... and consequently I came away very much impressed.

That's the great thing about modern, fleet-footed trailerable yachts such as the Spider 28. You can tow them to far away places, set sail, and leave the hassles of suburbia in your boiling wake. Of course, trailing and rigging the bigger boats provides their own headaches but it's a small price to pay.

The Spider is a Daddy Long Legs in terms of length and requires a four-wheel-drive or V8-powered car to safely tow it. The mast, too, can be something of a handful for one man despite a pivoting foot system. But it rewards the owner with cruising space and a top racing performance (TYA yardstick is 825, ahead of the Young 7.8, 795; Ross 780, 785; South Coast Magnum, 770; and Masrm 720, 755).

"There are some faster boats around but they have about one-tenth of the accommodation," Corlette said. "The people who buy them have had performance dinghies in the past. They start a family and go cruising but they need speed to keep the interest up." The test boat, in fact, had been bought by a baker from Grafton, in northern NSW, who wanted to cruise in it with his 12- and 15-year-old sons, using it as a caravan when on the road. He chose the fully-fitted configuration, including five



*Narrow boats like the 28 aren't slowed when heeled to extremes.*

sails, and as such there was no change out of 50 grand.

The home completion stage, which allows the owner to fit the boat as he wishes, costs just under half of that price — \$28,878 — while the sailaway version, with a mainsail and mylar No2 jib supplied, sells for \$35,668. Adding a custom trailer (\$4200), teak trimming (\$189), Mariner 8hp outboard (\$1436), spinnaker gear (\$1037) and bunk cushions (from \$963) soon brings the price up but, still, there's a lot of money floating around for trailer sailers in this size bracket.

Down below, the Spider was tastefully finished with grey carpet, matching bunk cushions and subtle trim, getting away from the "gin palace" look. The layout is open and pretty straightforward, with a large quarter berth, L-shaped galley and bathroom to port, and cushions running from quarter-berth to vee-berth on the starboard side. There's full headroom in the main cabin once the large pop-top is raised and a reasonable amount for'ard. A half bulkhead and the full centreboard case provide privacy for the toilet, entered from behind the vee berth.

The test boat's galley comprised a two-burner metho stove, a plastic bin in place of a small sink and limited cupboard space, and there was no table to prepare and eat meals on, something we almost take for granted. It's definitely not a strong point but then Corlette, a self-confessed "lightness freak", had set up the boat primarily for racing and dispensed with the weighty luxuries.

Future 28s, according to Corlette, will have the bulkhead further forward, under the chainplates which makes sense, reducing

the toilet area but allowing a larger moulded galley unit to be slotted in and a swing table to be fitted to the centreboard case. It will make the yacht far more suitable for its cruising and caravanning roles, accommodating a family of five.

The hull is constructed with the Epiglass SP System using biaxial, triaxial and quadaxial cloth and modified epoxy resin, vacuum-bagged for lightness and greater resistance to delamination. Balsa core is used in areas where the hull is subject to trailer compression and the rest is foam. It's an ideal lay-up for a trailer sailer, giving strength and rigidity to cope with the rig tension and hull pounding while keeping towing weight to a minimum. They're being built at Raymond Terrace, north of Sydney, by vacuum-bagging specialist John Dean.

The shape, borne from the design board of Gunter Heuchmer, has a fine, deep entry flaring gradually into a flat run and soft bilges, with the maximum beam (2.49m) carried well aft, making the boat easily driven, initially tender but progressively stiffer... and a willing planer downwind. It's self-righting when the 400kg bulb keel is fully dropped, so the boat can be taken short distances offshore.

Lowering and raising the keel with a hydraulic ram takes about 100 pumps of a handle in the cockpit, consuming two minutes, but subsequent Spiders may get an electric system to cut the time to 30 seconds. The rudder also drops vertically in a daggercase but it kept working its way up since the nylon chocks had worn: finally, a length of shockcord was needed. A swing bracket mounted on the back of the starboard seat lifts the outboard prop clear of the wake.



## DADDY LONG LEGS

The full-length cockpit seats had room for five at a pinch but most of the time we needed bums on the coaming, which was well angled for comfort and security. A traveller divides the cockpit sole: it's a neat unit with a box section moulded into the aluminium track for lateral strength, accepting a Ronstan Performance car fitted with Harken cleats and — a throwback to Corlette's Hobie 16 days — a 6:1 Harken mainsheet system.

The jib and spinnaker are sheeted by the halyard winches atop the cabin and all control lines lead aft from a cluster of pulleys at the mast base — a bit rough 'n' ready, boys — but are stored in good-sized pockets. Fine tuning for the jib luff tension comes from a Harken magic box.

Shroud tension is gained by using a 10:1 tackle system attached to the forestay and contained inside the anchor well. The tall section is raised from the bow; a two-man task that should be done with the boat facing the breeze, then the shrouds and lowers are shackled on slackly to the single

chainplate. The mast stands up well when the forestay is reefed on, despite having only a pair of swept-back spreaders.

It flies a 24sq m fully-battened, heavily-roached mylar/kevlar mainsail, 17.5sq m Nol headsail and a powerful 55sq m spinnaker. To date every owner has opted for the same mast and boom sections and all but one for Southside sails even though they're able to work out their own configurations. It makes for better class racing, and why change an efficient format?

With full sail hoisted and three crew on board the 28 excels in 5-15 knots, Corlette commented, but it's not the world's stiffest boat and you have to drop headsail size, slab reef the main or add bodies in anything stronger. On our test sail day there were gusts of up to 25 knots, giving the Spider a solid workout.

It handled the hard running like an overgrown skiff, bow pointing skyward, a waterfall cascading off the gunwales amidships, and spray jetstreaming from the stern. You have to steer it like a dinghy as well, bearing away as a gust hits to prevent heel and hardening up in the lulls. The sense of speed was tremendous — I'd say we were

doing 15 knots at times — but there was never a moments worry, with the Spider remaining manoeuvrable and surefooted. The crew weren't pressed either, the winches making light work of the spinnaker sheet, and the 6:1 mainsheet and 8:1 continuous vang system (adjusted from either side of the cockpit) keeping the full main in tow.

After quelling the kite, an easy job thanks to the whopping bag, we reefed the main in readiness for the return slog. It took only moments, the unwanted slab of sail hanging neatly beside the boom. A flattish storm jib was already hanked on.

The first bullet whistled around the point and the 28 rolled to it then accelerated, knuckling manfully through the swell as the sheethand played the sail judiciously. Rather than squeezing the yacht upwind we freed the jib a fraction and footed along at about six knots so our VMG, as they say, was quite good. But there's no reason why it couldn't point as high as most if needed during a race.

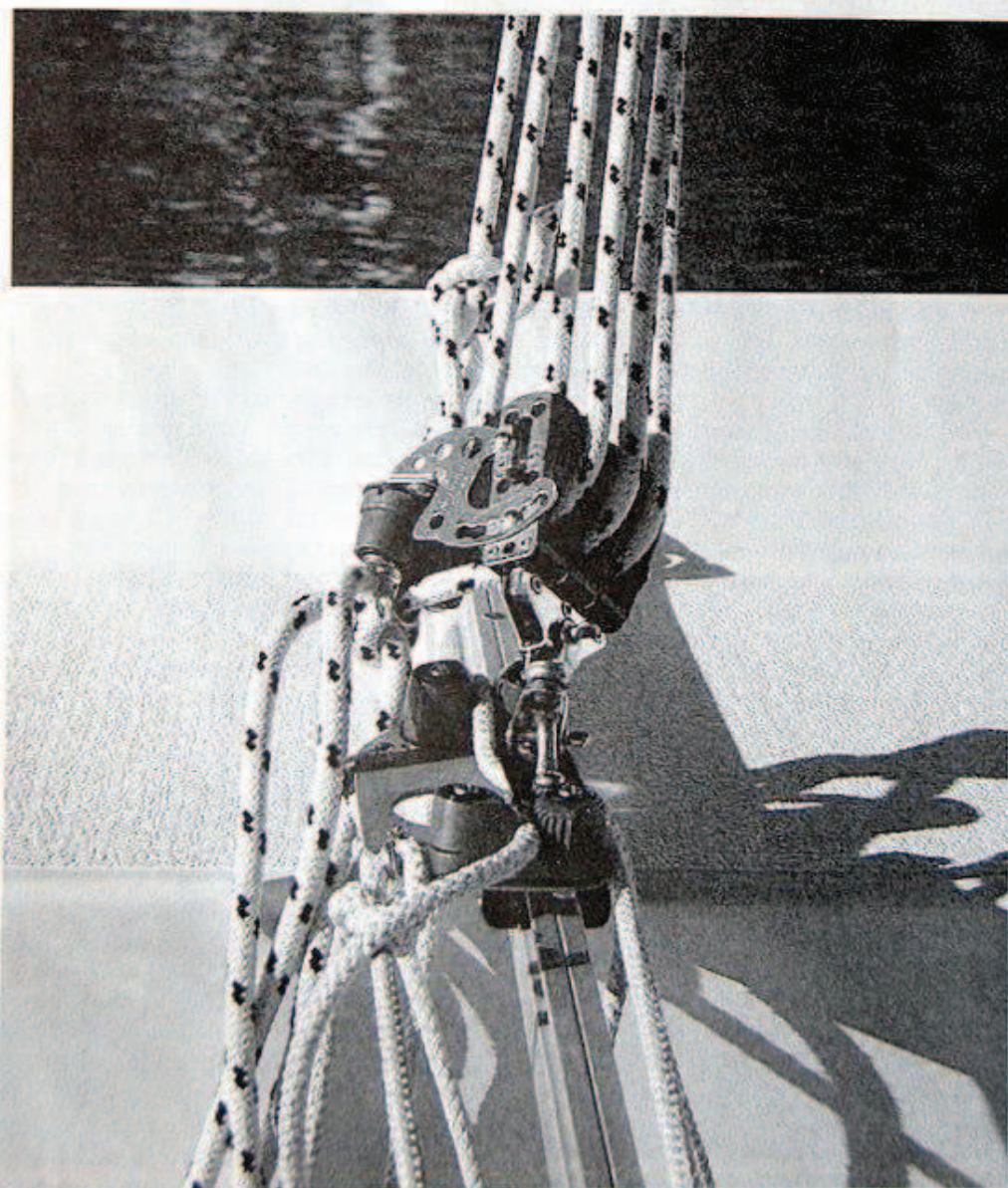
We arrived back at the marina in good time, feeling refreshed and quietly glad that we didn't have to unrig. If you'd been cruising for a week or had just won the race on some far-away waterway you wouldn't have minded so much — in other words if you're just going to race on Saturday arvo or daysail it may be better to find a mooring or marina berth. Then you can hit the traffic without the additional worry of a lengthy 1320kg burden.

### Summary

The Spider 28 may be too racy for the first-time trailer sailer buyer but for more experienced sailors it represents a nice marriage of pace and space. The home-completion option, which can save a considerable amount of cost and weight, will particularly suit those of a racing bent. Well built and fitted externally, it lacks only a table and a better galley inside to score top marks as an allrounder but that, along with other slight problems, should be amended in future boats. Like the Grafton baker, if you have the dough it's well worth a look. ☺

### SPECIFICATIONS

LOA:	8.35m
LWL:	7.90m
Beam:	2.49m
Draft:	1.82m
Balast:	400kg
Displacement:	1320kg
Mast height:	10.67m
Sail area:	
Main	24sq m
Nol:	17.5sq m
Kite:	55sq m
Price (as tested):	\$50,000
GIO Insurance:	\$580.15
Test boat:	Sydney Sailboat Centre Ph (02) 997 3077.



Mainsheet and traveller is a blend of Harken and Ronstan; as seen on Hobies.



# Swift Spider

**W**E WERE late. Bob Kay was waiting at the launching ramp with his Spider 28. Bob wasn't sure how many crew he could round up, so I had brought along a couple of backups, Rollo and Lord Jim, the Katzenjammer Kids, capable sailors, they assured me.

We were late, the traffic was bad, storm clouds were gathering, threatening to kill the photography, it was late in the day, I was beginning to fray at the seams. Rollo and Jim discovered I didn't have a carton of beer in the boot of the car and began to complain. I hoped Bob had brought the beer, but when we sighted the boat, my heart sank — it was not complete, and unlikely to have an icebox, let alone one full of beer.

The mumbling became threatening; the Kids' normally sunny dispositions were turning nasty. Bob Kay takes his sailing seriously — he looked affronted when the Kids asked about beer. The atmosphere grew thicker. Bob was ready to go. I gave Rollo \$20 and the car keys; he returned smiling only minutes later. Rollo and Jim sank a few as we rigged the boat and the atmosphere relaxed a little.

A couple of hours later we had had

---

A zippy racer, and with  
cruising potential, the  
Spider 28 is long, lean  
and smooth.

---

**BARRY TRANTER**  
went sailing with Bob Kay

---

a good sail and everyone was friendly. Sailing is like that — demanding as hell, but ultimately rewarding. Most of the time.

The Spider 28 was designed by Gunther Heuchmer, who also designed the fast little Spider 22. The moulds for the 28 are supervised by Bob Kay, a TYA racing identity for many years. It is not strictly a production boat; Bob will organise the hull, deck and furniture mouldings, complete to lockup stage, you do the rest yourself.

The long, lean hull is made with balsa coring. The keel is a vertical lifter with a lead bulb — 'the bomb' — on the bottom (where else?). There's 360kg of lead in the keel, 190kg of that in the bulb, down where

it can do most good. This has to ballast quite a big boat; Bob reckons sailing weight to be around 1300kg. "Displacement figures don't mean a thing," says Bob. "It's what you've got to drag around behind the car that counts."

The transom is open, the rudder a blade type in an aluminium frame, the outboard is carried on the transom. This was not hard to handle, as the low freeboard and modern longshaft motors combine to make it easy to reach the powerhead. Remember the days of skinning your knuckles on the pushpit, reaching down trying to start the reluctant little heap of corruption as the boat was swept inexorably on to the launching ramp? Sideways?

The rig is a single spreader arrangement, easy for two to set up. The forestay is tensioned by a well thought out system whereby the forestay is led down into a compartment in the extreme bow, back around a pulley, and tensioned by an upward tug on the business end of a tackle. The backstay is a very lightweight affair. Bob rigs his in a blow as a precaution, as it doesn't snarl the mainsail roach if there's enough breeze in the sail. In the light, when it would snarl and you don't





A good sail for all in the Spider — even better with 25 knots up the tail

need it anyway, he leaves it off.

The ballast bulb sits in a little recess on Bob's trailer. The bulb, naturally, always protrudes so the Spider draws 400mm with the keel up. As with most of these big boats, Bob has a couple of lateral guide wheels to steer the big boat straight, and the self-aligning rollers, tilt mechanism and electric winch do all the work; an easy retrieve for two.

### Accommodation

On Bob Kay's Spider the interior was not quite complete, so the best I can do is to describe the layout. A settee runs the full length of the starboard side, from the quarter berth aft through to the forepeak.

To port there's a separate head compartment forward of the bulkhead, and provision for a galley immediately aft of that bulkhead. This







Fast downhill and  
very stable, but the  
narrow boat's heeling  
tendency worried the  
Katzenjammer Kids  
initially



# Swift Spider

means sleeping room for five adults, plus a kid or two. The quarter berths are singles.

## Sailing

This is a narrow boat with not a lot of ballast and a big, big rig. Upwind in 12 to 16 knots of north easterly she heeled a lot, but not excessively. A bulb-keeled boat must wait until the bulb swings out to the side, as the boat heels, before it begins to exert maximum righting moment. The Spider tends to heel fast then stiffens up as the bulb takes over. Rollo and LJ were a bit worried by the angle of heel, but narrow boats have always sailed like this. The thing is it doesn't matter — you soon adapt to it if you're used to modern, fat undercanvassed types, but that's half the problem — many people have never sailed anything but fat undercanvassed modern types. It doesn't worry the boat to heel; it keeps driving. We had the big main well down the traveller, but the sail is so big and so roached that most of it kept working.

We tacked our way up to the top of the bay and Bob's capable crew, who races his Spider 28 two-handed (as crew for his 18-year-old daughter), tossed up the kite. Then he and Bob relaxed a little with smug grins all over their dials — this is what it's all about, their big grins said to the world at large, like addicts with a fix. The Spider is very fast downhill, and very, very stable. The wake comes off the stern so cleanly there's little sensation of speed as there's almost no noise. A large red marker passed close by, the only way we could even guess at our

speed — maybe a fraction under 10 knots. "It's better with 25 knots up the tail," said Bob. He was obviously disappointed he couldn't share the full extent of his addiction.

We hardened up for the reach home, the pole went forward to the forestay and the Spider raced away. She put her rail down a bit and flew, still dead straight and very fast. Not many years ago these speeds were exclusive to the better multihulls.

## Summary

Bob Kay reckons these boats are the quickest of the stock yachts in the TYA fleet; only, say, a Young 7.8 or a few hotrods — with big, twitchy rigs and masthead kites — are quicker around the course.

Bob also reports that all the Spider 28s sold so far have gone to family people with cruising aspirations; Bob's crew, for instance, was just finishing his complete teak interior

fitout, even adding a gas stove. So the boat obviously works as a cruiser/racer. Given the fixed cost of the towcar, maxis like this are no harder to handle than much smaller TYs — two people can launch, retrieve, sail and, no doubt, enjoy. ☺

## SPIDER 28

LOA .....	8.35m
LWL .....	7.9m
Beam .....	2.49m
Draft .....	400mm-1.8m
Sailing weight .....	1300kg
Ballast .....	360kg
Sail area	
main .....	24m <sup>2</sup>
headsail (150%) .....	17.5m <sup>2</sup>

Price: Complete hull to lockup stage, \$23,000 approx. Estimated cost of complete boat, ready to race, around \$35,000.

Designer: Gunther Heuchmer. More information from Bob Kay (02) 523-1501. GIO insurance premium \$549.65

