

THE ULTIMATE?

MODERN
boating

BOAT
TEST



RETRACTABLE keel yachts have now become a familiar part of this Australian yachting scene, taking over the trailer/sailer market to some extent in areas where people sail in fresher and more exposed waterways and where moorings for small cruiser/racer stock yachts are virtually non-existent. That these retractable keel, or dropkeel yachts in the 18ft to 22ft length overall group have been accepted for Junior Offshore Group racing and for such events as the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron's Offshore Cruise, is clearly indicative of their seaworthiness, for such acceptance by yacht clubs is not taken lightly.

Exposed waters such as Victoria's Port Phillip Bay, Queensland's Moreton Bay, Adelaide's St Vincent Gulf are more suited to keelboat yachts rather than centreboard trailer-sailers. But the big problem facing many boatowners and potential boatowners is where to moor their small yachts. Sheltered moorings are at a premium on each of these major sailing waters, so the solution lies in yachts which have retractable ballasted keels, yachts that can be kept at home, towed behind a car and launched and recovered from a ramp, or even wide, firm sand beach.

Melbourne yachtsmen were the first to exploit this idea and over the past few years several excellent designs of yachts with retractable ballasted keels have been built. They have met with quite considerable success, too, in inshore and short offshore racing, particularly with the JOG groups in Victoria and Queensland. Another area where the dropkeel or retractable keel yacht is an acquisition is for the countryman who sails on the many inland water storage dams throughout Australia. Because of varying depths of many such lakes due to seasonal demands on water, to keep a yacht on a mooring can be unsatisfactory, so again a trailerable yacht is the answer. We know of one 20-footer owned by a member of the Cootamundra Sailing Club, in southwestern New South Wales.

The newest retractable keel yacht to come on the market is the Ultimate

ULTIMATE stood up well in gusty 15-knotter under full sail. Cockpit is roomy for 18-footer, and there's four berths below. Drop ballast keel arrangement is perhaps closest to the best-of-all-worlds ideal.

imate 18 is the newest, and
 ie of the smallest boats on the
 arket featuring the ever more
 opular retractable keel con-
 uration. Tested on Port Phillip
 y by Peter Campbell.

Length overall	16'2"	
Length waterline	16'2"	
Maximum beam	6'11"	
Draft (keel up)	12" (.30m)	
(keel down)	3'11" (1.22m)	trailer
Displacement	1500lb (680kg)	
Ballast	450lb (204kg)	BUILDER
Sail area:		Bray Cou.
Mainsail	80 sq ft (7.4359m)	Victoria.

a sturdy fibreglass 18-footer built
 d sold in Victoria by brothers Harry
 d John Twikler of Ultimate Yachts,
 ankston. The boat was designed a
 uple of years ago and is now being
 eveloped and marketed properly for
 a first time.

At this size, weight and price (\$4980
 sic sailaway boat) the Ultimate 18
 doubtedly should fill an important
 o in the market -- for dinghy sailing
 nilies who want to get into a yacht
 ith a reasonable overnight
 commodation, good sailing qualities
 d keelboat stability, but are unable
 find a safe mooring. So they must
 ntinue to trail their sailboat.

The Ultimate 18 is 18ft 2in (5.49m)
 ght overall, has a waterline of 16ft
 1 (5.00m), a beam of 6ft 11in
 (1.4m) and a draft of 12in (.304m)
 th the keel up and 3ft 11in (1.22m)
 th it down. The hull has a fine entry
 d deep forefoot which give it
 cellent windward characteristics,
 m bilges and a wide beam which is
 rried well aft to give it good
 ility.

The hull has a deep skeg running aft
 the transom with the large rudder
 ounted on the transom. The
 ractable keel is of hollow fibreglass
 th 450lb of lead in a shoe at the
 ottom. Stainless steel bolts run
 rough the fin itself to the top, where
 special windlass lifts it up in the
 ntre of the cabin.

The Ultimate 18 is a very sturdy
 at, with the hull built up from 8oz
 opped strand mat fibreglass, ranging
 thickness from 5/16in to 5/8in
 ong the keel line. The gelcoat finish
 terscotch on the boat we tested) is
 p grade and hulls are available in
 most any color. The hull and deck
 e separate moulds, joined at the
 ntwale, with solidly reinforced deck,
 cockpit and coamings.

The rig is a simple masthead sloop rig
 ith single spreaders, cap shrouds and
 ngle lowers.

The 24in long chain plates go
 rough the deck and are moulded
 to the hull. The backstay can be
 djustable or fixed. Working sail area
 als 156sq ft (14.49sq.m) comprising
 80sq ft (7.43sq.m) mainsail and
 5sq ft (7.06sq.m) jib. The No 1 genoa

is 110sq ft (10.22sq.m) and the
 spinnaker 240sq ft (22.29sq.m). Roller
 reefing is standard equipment but
 surprisingly, a boom vang is not.

The sails were made Peter Green of
 Frankston, who was formerly with
 Prior sails. The genoa was a
 particularly nice sail, giving the
 Ultimate 18 plenty of drive in our test
 in a 10-12 knot breeze on Port Phillip.
 The mainsail suffered from the lack of
 a boom vang.

Layout of the Ultimate 18 is simple
 and functional, both on deck and
 below, and comfortably fitted out by
 her owner Mr M. Wilson of Davies Bay
 Yacht Club for family cruising and
 racing. The big cockpit is divided by a
 traveller for the end-boom sheeting,
 giving the helmsman an area of his
 own, with the crew working for'ard of
 the traveller.

A feature which I particularly liked
 was the high coaming, with built-in
 pedestals for the genoa winches. This
 not only keeps the cockpit extremely
 dry, but gives an excellent backrest.
 However, I thought the Barlow 12
 winches too small for the size of the
 No 1 genoa. Two small hatches are
 located in the cockpit seats right aft --
 one for a gas bottle, the other an
 icebox. On the foredeck there is an
 anchor well with hatch large enough to
 take Sealock 6 anchor, the size
 approved for JOG racing in a boat of
 this size.

Although the retractable keel cuts
 the main cabin in two, the below
 decks design has been well tailored to
 make full use of every square foot of
 space. To port is a fixed table with
 seating for two with the top of the
 keel (when lowered) augmenting this.
 To starboard is a galley with
 two-burner stove and sink, with
 cupboards below. Quarter berths are
 located on each side, with the
 outboard stowing under the cockpit.
 Up for'ard are two vee berths, with
 space for a marine head in between.

The battery box is located under the
 starboard bunk, stowage under the
 port and in the forepeak is the
 watertank -- in this case a collapsible
 water bag. All wood trim, cupboard
 doors, handrails, etc are in teak.

An outboard motor (5-6hp motor is

adequate) clamps onto a special fitting
 that sits it outboard of the transom.
 However, some modification here is
 necessary as the rudder blade can
 easily be hit and damaged by the
 propeller when using the motor. The
 motor on the test boat was,
 incidentally, an Archimedes Penta,
 which powered the boat along very
 well.

Price of a basic sailaway Ultimate 18
 is a most reasonable \$4980. This
 includes natural anodised mast and
 boom, all rigging and deck fittings,
 Barlow 12's, a mainsail and jib, bunks
 but no cushions, and sliding hatch
 cover. Factory extras include pulpit
 and pushpit, stanchions and lifelines,
 bunk cushions, marine head, genoa
 and spinnaker and spinnaker fittings,
 outboard motor and outboard bracket
 and a trailer specially designed and
 built for the Ultimate 18. Price of the
 trailer is \$470 and it is specially
 designed and balanced to make towing
 behind a family Holden quite
 effortless.

Sailing qualities of the Ultimate 18
 are quite impressive. She is obviously a
 fast little yacht, while her fine entry
 and overlapping genoa give her
 excellent pointing ability. On the day I
 tested her she suffered from the lack
 of boom vang and cunningham eye to
 flatten the mainsail when the wind
 freshened. She had a lot of weather
 helm in the gusts up to 15 knots. An
 adjustable backstay would be an
 acquisition and a boom vang a must.

Nevertheless, she showed lots of
 speed and on a broad reach we clearly
 outpaced a popular 27ft cruising
 sloop. Later, the boat gave proof of
 her handling and close windward
 ability when I sailed her hard on the
 wind up the fairway at St Kilda
 marina, tacking a dozen or more times
 in the narrow channel.

Well tuned and well crewed, the
 Ultimate 18 obviously has potential
 for round-the-buoys racing or JOG
 sailing with an experienced crew. Her
 rating is 14.5ft, giving her a TCF of
 .5504.

However, probably most Ultimate
 18's will be bought (initially at any
 rate) for family cruising, as step-up
 from the off-the-beach family dinghy.

Trailer-sailers

Ultimate 18

This snappy little trailer-sailer has found greatest favour in its home state of Victoria. However, its fame is rapidly spreading to other states, and there is no doubt that before long the distinctive appearance of this boat will be seen on waterways across the country.

It is distinctive in many ways. It has less of the modern, streamlined appearance of most yachts, preferring the solid, seaworthy look of older-style boats. This is enhanced by the firm lines of the hull, the low cabin, and the straight transom which have a flavour of tradition about them.

However, it is only in appearance that this boat is traditional, for her performance in light to moderate conditions is up to the best of the more modern, racy-looking craft. She is designed principally as a cruising boat, and as such is ideal for a small family, particularly in the summer climate, for the designer has given over a certain amount of cabin room for a superbly wide, long cockpit. In good weather most boat owners spend the greater proportion of their sailing time in the cockpit, and the cabin is purely for sleeping or for when conditions are bad. The cockpit on the Ultimate 18 has almost the full width of the boat giving wide seats and even wider leg room.

She is simply rigged with normal sloop jib and main, thus making her easy to prepare prior to launching. And with regard to launching, her 700 kilogram displacement is no hassle either when being towing behind the car or rolling on or off the trailer.

Accommodation is extremely well organised, using the space under the big cockpit for quarter berths either side, the forward area as two berths, with toilet between if required, and table and galley alternately on port and starboard side. The rudder is transom-hung and thus does not clutter the cockpit, and winches are not necessary.

All of this adds up to a delightful little boat, with a very attractive appearance, comfortable accommodation and an excellent cockpit. Without doubt, an ideal family trailer-sailer.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	5.6 m
LWL	5.03 m
Beam	2.2 m
Maximum draft	1.2 m
Minimum draft	0.3 m
Displacement	700 kg
Ballast	200 kg
Hull material	Fibreglass
Keel type	Retractable
Buoyancy	Nil
Jib	7.07 m ²
Main	7.43 m ²
Berths	4
Cockpit capacity	6
Motor	2-4 hp (1.49-2.98 kW) outboard
Price (at Jan. 1977)	\$5,995
Manufacturer	Ultimate Yachts Unit 2, Bray Court New Street Frankston Victoria 3199

