

BOAT REVIEW BY TONY BESSINGER

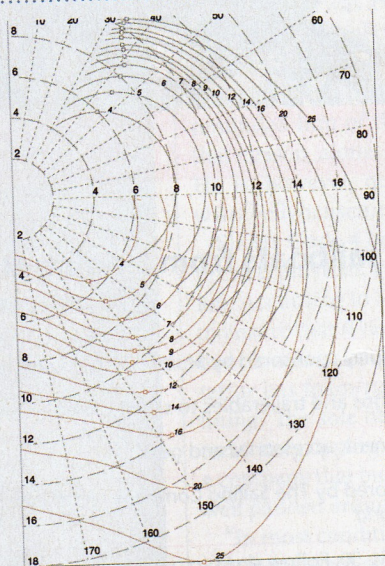
A French Beauty Makes its U.S. Debut

AS MUCH AS WE KEEP OUR FINGERS ON the pulse of the new-boat market, every once in a while a new design from Europe catches us by surprise. Such is the case with the French-built Archambault 35, a crossover that comes with a proven track record at European IRC events. The boat is now being imported by Archambault Boats, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and we got a chance to sail it last June. It quickly became clear why there are already 136 A35s built and sailing. This clean, simple, fast design, which can be ordered in single or twin rudder configuration, is a phenomenal boat to sail. Anyone in the market for a 35-foot crossover design with a bent towards the racing side should take a serious look.

For more than 50 years, Archambault has been building sailboats near Chatellerault, France, a two-hour drive from the Atlantic coast. The builder's A40 was awarded the Yacht of the Year by the French sailing magazine *Voile* in 2004, and the A35, a Joubert-Nivelte design, received the same honor in 2007. As new boats to the North American market, we'll be sailing both this fall during SW's annual Boat of the Year trials.

Fingertips on the wheel, now that's the way a boat should be driven, and indeed, that's how we were steering the A35 during our test sail. The breeze was up to around 13 knots, the bay was flat, and the boat was so much fun to drive we hardly noticed the cold drizzle. Sailing with a

ARCHAMBAULT 35	
LOA	34'8"
LWL	38'7"
Beam	11'5"
DSPL	9,810 lbs.
Draft	6'8"
SA (u/d)	726/1,431 sq. ft.
www.archambault-boats.ca	



crew of six, all of whom had just completed the New York YC Annual Regatta, presented by Rolex, made the sail even more pleasurable, as every maneuver was carried out with calm, quiet precision.

The A35 we sailed was exceptionally well finished, as one would expect from a high number in a series build. The decks



THE ARCHAMBAULT 35'S interior belies the boat's size. For distance racing, two pipe berths can be set up aft of the nav station.

are built using a resin-injection process, the hull is foam cored from the waterline up. Below it there's solid glass. There's no headliner, and the cabin-top profile is low, but there's enough headroom inside for a six-footer to stand comfortably.

The boat's hull, rudder, and keel are faired at the factory, so no additional work on those critical components needs to be done post delivery. The keel is cast iron with a lead bulb that's swept aft, which will be a relief for anyone who's dealt with T-keels and crab traps.

The A35 is equipped with Ronstan deck gear, which includes adjustable jib tracks and inhaulers. The jammers, which sit just forward of the companionway on the cabintop, are Spinlock, and the twin swept spreader carbon rig is made by Formula Spars, although for the American version



WITH A 1.033 IRC RATING the A35, Ciao, (below) finished third in its division at New York YC's Annual Regatta, its first U.S. event.

on our test sail. The toerail extends from the bow to well aft of the shroud bases, which means the first three crew on the rail have to deal with it when they're hiking. It's rounded enough to be bearable, and the crew had no complaints.

The round forward hatch was plenty large enough for dousing and launching the boat's symmetric spinnaker, and the carbon-fiber spinnaker pole is jibed end-for-end. The designer and the development team considered a sprit-flown asymmetric, but determined the rating penalty to be too great. With the racing package, the boat comes with UK/Halsey main, four jibs, two masthead kites, and one fractional kite.

In flat water, with 11.5 knots of breeze, we sailed upwind at 6.5 knots. The steering system is incredibly smooth and responsive to subtle turns on the wheel, so a heavy handed driver would have to learn some finesse to sail the boat well.

Downwind, in 13.5 knots of wind, we

of the boat, U.S. mast builders are being seriously considered. The carbon rig is an option in Europe, but will most likely be standard in the U.S. version, as will a carbon boom. The main halyard is hoisted from the base of the mast (inside the boat), and the mast itself is equipped with a screw jack for fore and aft adjustment. The running rigging, which is part of the race package, is all Maffioli, and the standing rigging is rod.

The boat we sailed came with a carbon-fiber wheel, but there are a variety of steering and rudder options, including a tiller, which will move the helmsman (and his weight) considerably further forward, and move the main trimmer aft of the driver. There's also a version with twin rudders,

which according to the Archambault rep we sailed with, is every bit as fast as the single-rudder version. There's also an option for a line-control console in the center of the cockpit, a feature designed for shorthanded racing. The backstay has a 16-to-1 purchase, and leads to jammers near the main trimmer.

The cockpit is spacious, perfect for the crew of eight that the boat typically races with in Europe. There are foot blocks everywhere, including one running down the center of the cockpit floor. Both the main and the headsail trimmer's positions were comfortable, and provide great visibility of their respective sails. "One of the best I've found so far," said the headsail trimmer who sailed with us

PETER MCGOWAN

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Sailing WORLD



Sneak Peek: Melges 20

In July, a Melges factory team, including Andy Burdick, Harry Melges, and Charlie Harrett (left), got first licks on the first Melges 20 to come out of Mc-

Conaghy Boats in China. "Harry's comment was that it felt bigger than 20 feet," says Burdick, "but it'll definitely be fast."

Keeping in step with the latest design trend, the 992-pound Reichel/Pugh design even sports a little chine in its aft section—part looks, part downwind performance, says Burdick. The rest of the boat gets much of its DNA from the Melges 24, right on down to the kelp cutter. The hull and deck are standard glass and the rig, boom, and tiller are carbon. There are no winches, but there's a recessed roller-furling unit with zipper-luff jib. A few other tricks to simplify the boat are a retrieval line on the spinnaker, which will pull the 430-sq. ft. masthead kite into a bag, and adjustable shroud tracks to allow quick, on-the-fly rig tune.

Strict one-design enthusiasts will be happy to know there's no crew weight limit, legs-in restricted hiking, no fairing, and it's open to sailmakers. The price range is \$40,000 to \$45,000 for a "race ready" boat with trailer, sails, cover, and Maffioli rigging. www.melges20.com

—DAVE REED

similar-size boats jealous, as it's spacious enough even for someone my size (6'3", 240 pounds). Behind the head is a large area for storage that can also be equipped with two pipe berths, which were on the boat we sailed. There's a table with two leaves surrounding the mast, and forward of that is a large, open area for sail stowage or a V-berth. There are handholds galore, with two primary holds to port and starboard that are bolted through the deck and to the jib tracks. The fit and finish, and the amount of storage space is excellent, with one feature being particularly impressive; molded-in boxes for the B&G 3000 displays.

The final test was the engine and back-down routine. The engine, a 21 hp Yanmar diesel, purrs along quietly at 2,200 RPM, and burns a one-quarter gallon of fuel per hour at 6 knots of boatspeed. With the wheel pushed hard over, the boat turns well within its own length, and the backdown was easily accomplished.

Equipped with the racing package, the boat will cost \$250,000, delivered in the U.S., and that includes the B&G 3000 system. The full racing sails package will run an additional \$40,000. ♦

hoisted one of its masthead kites, and the boat rejoiced, cranking off 7.5 to 8.5 knots. It was a pleasure to feel the effect of every puff with near instantaneous rudder input. When tight reaching, we tried to get the rudder to cavitate and the boat to spin out, but it was obvious there was substantial foil area below the water-

line and the boat stayed on its feet.

Large portlights and an open interior give a feeling of space down below, but there's plenty of room for cruising on weekends. There's a small galley abaft the companionway to starboard, with a double-bunk cabin aft of that. The navigation station, which would make navigators of

COURTESY MELGES SAILBOATS



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