

# Canadian Yachting Review of CS34

## CS 34

### **A racer/cruiser priced and equipped for the established sailor and first-time buyer**

**By Lloyd Hircock**

<http://www.cymagazine.ca/>

At Toronto's Dockside in-water boat show September, 1989, CS Yachts unveiled its new 34 -- so new that it didn't even have an interior. The new Tony Castro design had first been put into production by MG Yachts in England, and CS had yet to sort out its own accommodations plan and detailing. Nonetheless, consumer reaction was positive. Fueled by an innovative marketing concept (introductory price under 90 G's) and some interesting features, the design gained an instant following: ready buyers. (Nothing succeeds like price point.)

"We wanted," said newly installed marketing manager Stuart Robertson "a 'show stopper' to introduce what we believe is the only quality 34-footer in today's market at an affordable price. Our strategy was to target second-time owners and at the same time pitch first-time buyers with a true-value bargain." The strategy appears to have worked and Robertson was happy to display affidavits from satisfied owners championing the qualities of the new yacht, above and below the waterline.

### **Over 80 boats built**

By the summer of 1990, hull number 70 was shipped and, according to new general manager Jerry Cockerill, customer interest remains buoyant, despite an economic downturn. Cockerill says eight 34s were sold at the 1990 Dockside show. Naturally, with all the favourable comment generated, I was keen to step aboard, go for a sail, and see for myself. But first I toured the CS plant in Brampton, Ontario.

Boasting 115,000 square feet (since the last expansion in 1986) of production space, the company employs 95 workers during peak periods. Presently three designs are offered: the Merlin 36, CS 40 and the 34. A pilot version of the 40, planned for a late fall launch, has been shelved indefinitely. [CS Yachts has since closed its doors, ed.]

Structurally, the 34 is conventionally built to CS standards. There are no exotic glass hybrids here. Hull and deck consist of mat roving with vacuum-bagged balsa coring along the topsides above the boot top and in horizontal deck panels.

To facilitate assembly and cost efficiency per unit, overhead liners, moulded pans and locker panels are employed throughout. Bulkheads and compartment structures are pre-assembled (unitized) then bonded to the unsupported hull. Capping and sealing the moulded deck to the unit completes the basic structure.

### **Keel Configurations**

Unlike similar designs the CS 34 has a shallow bilge, without a sump. The keel is bolted directly to the yacht bottom. Three keels are available: a shoal draft, winged, and for

those racing/cruising enthusiasts a semi-elliptical deep-fin version with bulb. Our test boat sported the deep-fin version.

Like all recent CS designs, the coach house rises high above the deck to accommodate maximum head room below (six feet, three inches). To accommodate headroom in the V-berth area the cabin trunk has been extended forward. The result is a foreshortened bow area which, when coupled with the arrow-straight sheer, creates an illusion of bulkiness forward. In my opinion, the yacht is not as handsome as the recent CS 30, but one cannot deny the practical benefits achieved belowdecks.

While the deck area forward has been shortened, the cockpit remains spacious and designed for maximum comfort. I found the helm seat sufficiently elevated for me to see above the coach roof. Thankfully the unit has been rather comfortably designed., thus reducing the threat of developing a sore touche after a brief stint at the wheel. (Whitlock steering system is standard.) Twin cockpit lockers provide generous storage capabilities while a separate aft locker harbours the propane tank. Although I thought the cockpit well designed and comfortable, I was puzzled by the location of the engine kill switch directly below the helm seat. The unit should be relocated to avoid being stepped on and crunched during watch changes.

I like the deck layout. It is to the point and simple to work. All halyards lead aft to the cockpit, for ease of handling -- resolving the insecurity of deck climbing during foul weather. Directed through blocks fastened at the mast collar, the running rigging travels aft under a moulded deck cover to a bank of rope clutches.

In keeping with the simplicity of the system, the mainsail employs single-line reefing, negating the need for a crew member to go forward to the goose neck and attach the sail cringle to the horn. The practical aspects of this reefing system are readily apparent to sailing families, and provides a safety measure for sail-shortening during adverse conditions.

### **Doghouse mounted main traveller**

The mainsail traveller track is fastened forward of the companionway, conveniently removed from the traffic flow in the cockpit. Besides "opening up the cockpit" the track placement creates extra seating which had previously been lost when the track was positioned across the bridge-deck below the companionway.

The CS 34 rig is a bit of a surprise -- it is deck stepped. The untapered Isomat section boasts a double set of spreaders and masthead rig. Having a deck-stepped mast suggests a roomier cabin interior, but the substitution of a large compression tube, for the keel-stepped mast, diminishes the "wide-open" concept considerably. A residual benefit is the muffling of mast chatter associated with a keel-stepped mast and perhaps one less place to leak if the mast boot is improperly fitted.

### **Test Sail**

During our test sail, I ventured forward along the side deck and up onto the coach roof to the mast. With a freshening breeze heeling the yacht past 15 degrees, I found the journey uneventful. The deck is free of major obstacles, while the holding power of the moulded non-skid was sufficient to ensure my safety even when the deck was wet. And the distance from the raised coach roof to the side deck, although significant, even at our present angle of heel, was not as precarious as I had imagined.

Returning to the security of the cockpit I leaned against the contoured backrest supporting my lower back. (Shorter crew will enjoy the same comfort in their mid-back area.) Even

with four adults lounging in the cockpit there was plenty of extra space left to accommodate others.

Venturing below decks while underway is always an adventure with the risk directly proportional to the angle of the heel. While not exactly a total klutz on a boat, I nevertheless seek the nearest legitimate handhold for the balance. Negotiating my way down the companionway stairs (the stairs are angled, providing a semblance of levelness as the yacht heels) I reached for an overhead rail handrail. There wasn't one. Too bad: I'd recommend installing an overhead rail through the main cabin passageway, from the head to the V berth.

## **The Grand Tour**

The vessel's interior is richly appointed and the saloon contains teak-faced side cabinets and shelving with strip-teak battens lining the walls, all satin varnished. A teak and ash sole has been installed throughout. Dark blue upholstery with white dots contrasted with the cream-coloured ceiling panels and moulded white galley and chart table facings. Centre stage, as one descends into this cavalcade of colour, is the horse-shoe-shaped galley. Twin moulded sinks and a single dry locker stall are fitted forward of the gimbaled Force 10 stove/oven combo. All galley plumbing is easily accessible for maintenance, below the sink. Enough pantry space and shelving is provided above the stove behind plastic sliding doors to accommodate most culinary supplies.

Across the passageway to starboard sits the chart table/refrigerator combo. While not a new concept, the design is a good feature on a boat with limited space. While I've never been impressed with a "split" galley, there is no denying the utility of this system. One minor irritation is the lack of what I term "cleaning slots" around the galley top perimeter. Cleaning the top is much easier if the fiddle design incorporates breaks or slots so the assorted crumbs are easily captured. If your next yacht purchase is missing these essential slots, ask the salesperson to throw in a battery-operated vacuum to deal with the problem!

Boasting accommodation for seven, I found the design had comfortable sleeping quarters. With standing headroom featured in the V-berth area, and a folding door to ensure privacy (though the folding door restricted traffic flow from behind the dinette table, when latched open) the spacious V-berth area can justifiably be called a separate cabin. Plenty of drawer space and a hanging locker are built into the surrounding cabinetry. Ventilation is good, provided by a large opening hatch.

The aft cabin, located behind the galley, is comfortable and surprisingly large, accommodating two consenting adults with ease. The first batch of CS 34s came out of the moulds without any ventilation ports, a problem quickly rectified with the addition of twin ports opening to the cockpit. A hanging locker is available, and ample shelving has been provided for storage.

Both the stuffing box compartment and the vessel's battery storage area, as well as side access to the engine, are reached from the aft cabin.

The 34 features a nicely appointed head ensemble to starboard, aft of the chart table. After a night's sleep at the dock -- or during watch -- the separate moulded shower stall, with the third hanging locker also houses the vessel's hot water tank, a clever use of space generally allocated to a cockpit locker.

Engine compartment space is at a premium. Some components, like the stuffing box and batteries, are easy to reach, while a simple oil change will require a certain amount of acrobatic dexterity to complete. Recently an inspection port, accessible from the head,

was added to assist in engine maintenance.

One area in which the CS 34 is not limited is ventilation. I like plenty of easily controlled ventilation in a design. Fourteen opening ports, including hatches, are available, providing lots of fresh air in the cabin area. As well, an abundance of natural light filters through the ports, creating an open-air atmosphere belowdeck.

## **Power Plant**

At night artificial light is generated by the twin 12-volt ship's batteries, while a separate deep-cycle battery cranks the 18-hp two-cylinder Yanmar diesel. (Originally the design featured a Universal diesel.) An optional 28-hp Yanmar is available. I would opt for the extra horsepower if I intended to sail offshore or down the ICW to Florida and beyond. Our test sail took place off Port Credit on Lake Ontario. A freshening 15 knotter soon had us humming along in great style. She's a delightful sailer. All I needed was fingertip control upwind to keep her on a steady course.

## **Sail Inventory**

We raced along under full main and 135 percent genoa (the North Sails inventory is stock equipment with the sailaway price). We found the yacht, under our present conditions, sailed better with a reefed main. The platform quickly gained less heel, and speed remained constant. The yacht maintained momentum through a tack and quickly regained speed.

## **A Performance Cruiser**

The yacht is built for performance cruising with an eye on the race course. With her comfortable layout and ease of handling she should (as CS planned) appeal to second owners moving up (suffering from footitis), and new inductees to our sport. Certainly the combination of price, 65 standard features and the transferable hull warranty package makes for an enticing proposition indeed.

## **Specifications**

LOA 33 ft. 6in.

LWL 27 ft. 8 in.

Beam 11 ft. 3 in.

Draft 4 ft. 6 in. (shoal/wing); 6 ft. 3 in. (fin)

Weight 10,500 lbs