BOAT TEST BY DIETER LOIBNER

The Best of Both Worlds

By satisfying both sides of the motorsailer equation, the spiffy Bruckmann 50 challenges some long-held sentiments

DYED-IN-THE-WOOL SAILORS often cast a weary eye at traditional motorsailers, with their heavy displacement, workboat-like hull shapes, and small sail area, and are never shy to voice their opinions about supposedly limited sailing abilities and less than thrilling speed under power. They may not have noticed that design developments in recent years have produced more spacious and comfortable cruising boats that sail well and are also equipped with more powerful engines to cover substantial distances under power if need be.

So is the modern motorsailer threatened by extinction? Designer Mark Ellis and builder Mark Bruckmann of Bruckmann Yachts, in Ontario, Canada, strongly deny it. The two men have known each other since their days at C&C Yachts in the early 1970s, when Ellis worked in the custom-boat division, which was headed by Bruckmann's father. Having earned his stripes early in his career with C. Raymond Hunt & Associates, Phil Rhodes, and Ted Hood, Ellis always liked clear design concepts. "A true motorsailer should perform well under sail and power, separately or in combination," he says. And Bruckmann adds that "the 50 offers the best of both worlds. Customers who want to sail can save face with a good sailboat and still have the comfort and livability, which might be important to their wives." In his opinion, motorsailers that excel under power and sail keep people in the sport who'd otherwise switch to trawlers.

Shippy Features

At the dock, the Bruckmann 50's appearance is dominated by the large pilothouse and the voluminous stern. Says Ellis, "For motorsailers, a modern hull shape, with short overhangs, a long waterline, wide stern, flat bottom, and modest displacement-to-length ratio, changes the terms of reference. This configuration offers good upwind sailing ability with little weather helm and prevents the stern from 'squatting' when powered up." This shape has been refined from the Northeast 400, an earlier Ellis design that's being built by Cabo Rico.

Aside from performance considerations, a wide transom also makes it easy to board the boat and accommodates the full-width swim platform. A walk forward through the hinged door and past the 44-inch steering wheel brings one to the teak-grated cockpit, which opens up around a folding-leaf table that features grabrails, a built-in cooler, and a trash bin. The molded helm seat and angled footrest on the cockpit sole are good ergonomic details one doesn't necessarily expect to see on a motorsailer. The two electric self-tailing Lewmar primaries and manual secondary winches are within arm's reach of the skipper. A vented locker holds the 20-pound propane tank.

To exit the cockpit, the crew has to step over high and steep coamings, a good safety feature for rough weather. Forward on deck, there's ample support on 29-inch lifelines (with one gate on each side), solid stainless-steel handholds on the cabin top, and 4-inch teak-capped bulwarks. Sheave organizers at the mast base route the control lines aft through tubes on the side of the deckhouse, keeping this area free of clutter. Fine but effective nonskid provides secure footing on the working surfaces. All deck hardware is by Harken or Lewmar and is stout and well placed, but offshore-minded owners might want to install mast pulpits. The dual anchor rollers on the bow platform are properly sized to handle the ground tackle and align with the electric windlass, which has two wildcats and a rope drum.

The Bruckmann 50's offshore capabilities are also reflected in the construction. Hull and deck are each molded as single pieces, laid up by hand with fiberglass roving and vinylester resin. The Core-Cell foam core is vacuum bagged to the outer skin. The hull/deck joint is bonded and bolted at the flange, and deck fittings are backed by aluminum plates.

When the breeze freshens, the Bruckmann 50 shows surprising speed for a vessel displacing 44,000 pounds.

ONNE VAN DER WAL

The spacious pilothouse (above) is functional, comfortable, and provides 360-degree visibility. Three steps down, to port, the U-shaped galley (left) features a fridge and freezer, microwave, and a Force 10 ceramic stove and oven.

A Level Playing Field

The transition from the outside cockpit to the spacious pilothouse through the sliding glass door is absolutely level and easy to negotiate. To prevent downflooding in rough weather, a removable bridgedeck (optional) can be inserted into the cockpit's molded-in recesses. The inside of the pilothouse is dominated by a raised convertible dinette to port, a lounge seat with ottoman, and the inside steering station to starboard, which includes a Raymarine electronics package and an angled chart table. This setup is practical because it makes room for an open chart book next to the wheel, beneath the chart-plotter screen. Dan Betty, the owner of the tested boat, swung around the swiveling helm seat to open the sliding doors to the cavernous starboard locker. "I never travel without my guitars," he smiled. "And that's where they live." Betty was very involved in customizing his vessel and worked with Bruckmann to suggest modifications, such as raising the pilothouse by 3 inches or installing a slow-turning John Deere engine for greater torque at low rpm, more efficient power distribution, and less noise and vibration.

Large sliding windows, three windshields, and two well-placed skylight hatches provide unobstructed, 360-degree visibility and a clear view of the rig from the helm

seat. The test boat was appointed in mahogany trim, contrasted by white surfaces, ceiling liners, and beige Ultrasuede cushions. Bruckmann's joiner work is impressive, protected by flawless varnish that also was applied to the teak-and-holly sole. An overhead handrail guides the crew forward to the three-step drop into the hull's midsection. The U-shaped galley to port is functional at the dock and under way, with a double stainless-steel sink, pressure hot and cold water, foot pumps for fresh and salt water, fridge and freezer, microwave, and a three-burner Force 10 ceramic stove and oven. On the tested boat, the bulkhead of the den to starboard was moved forward at Betty's request to create more space for an L-shaped settee that converts into a full sea berth, complete with lee cloth. This area also serves as an office (with wireless Internet connection), as the laundry room (with a full-size washer and dryer), and as an entertainment center (with a flat-panel television).

Forward through the centerline passageway, both heads and a shared shower compartment are to port, opposite the guest cabin. The master suite is in the forward cabin and has a traditional V-berth, ample storage, a cedar-lined hanging locker, and access to the private head. Ventilation throughout the boat is good, with eight screened opening ports, six vent hatches, and two dorade vent boxes with 4-inch stainless-steel cowls.

Attention to Details

Bruckmann didn't cut corners in dark nooks and under the floorboards. A peek into the bilge reveals a deep sump, color-coded PVC pipes and couplers, and Marelon seacocks on the underwater through-hulls. Three high-capacity electric bilge pumps with auto float switches are backed up by a manual Whale Gusher pump in the cockpit. Two 100-gallon stainless-steel water tanks hold a good supply for passagemaking.

All electrical wiring is executed to ABYC standards. The test boat was equipped with two 8D house batteries, one 8D thruster/windlass battery, one S30 engine-start battery, an 8-kilowatt Northern Lights genset, and a 1,000-watt inverter/charger.

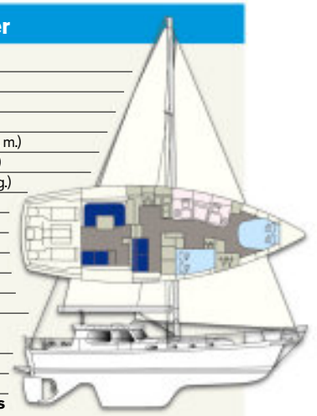
Surprising Under Sail

After the boat had scored points at the dockside walk-through with solid design and execution, a single important question remained: How would the Bruckmann 50 perform? Setting sail on a blustery day off the harbor at Falmouth, Massachusetts, was a cinch: We unrolled the furled genoa and hoisted the main out of the Leisure Furl boom. Despite a displacement-to-length ratio of 262, the boat came to life during the southward beam reach on Vineyard Sound, trucking along at a constant 8 knots in a building offshore breeze and flat water. Sailing to weather with its 6-foot Scheel keel and 16,000 pounds of cast lead-alloy ballast, the boat felt well balanced when steered from the cockpit's mechanical helm. Forward visibility through the large windows of the pilothouse was surprisingly good, and with the zip-away panel of the two-piece bimini removed, rig and sails were in full view. Singlehanded tacks and jibes were doable; all essential lines, sheets, and winches lay within reach.

Bruckmann 50 Motorsailer

LOA	49' 4" (15.03 m.)
LWL	42' 2" (12.85 m.)
Beam	15' 5" (4.70 m.)
Draft	6' 0" (1.83 m.)
Sail Area (100%)	1,080 sq. ft. (100 sq. m.)
Ballast	16,000 lb. (7,273 kg.)
Displacement	44,000 lb. (20,000 kg.)
Ballast/D	.36
D/L	262
SA/D	13.83
Water	200 gal. (758 l.)
Fuel	250 gal. (948 l.)
Mast Height	63' 2" (19.25 m.)
Engine	John Deere 150-hp. diesel
Designer	Mark Ellis
Price	$900,000

Bruckmann Yachts
(905) 855-1117
www.bruckmannyachts.com



Betty excused himself to prepare tuna sandwiches below, a good moment to switch to the inside helm station, keeping him company and trying the hydraulic steering system. While obviously not as responsive as the mechanical system in the cockpit, it provided enough feedback to steer the boat efficiently from the comfort of its location.

On the way home, the breeze freshened to more than 20 knots, producing double-digits on the speedo, surprising for a vessel with a displacement of 44,000 pounds. "It might sound like bragging, but this is nothing unusual," Betty said, casually lounging behind the dinette. "But it's a motorsailer, so why don't we try the engine?" We furled the jib with the electric winch, and the full-battened main quickly disappeared inside the Leisure Furl boom. To do that by himself, Betty ran the halyard to the manual and the furling line to the electric winch, using his foot to push the power button on the cockpit coaming. This allowed him to furl the sail perfectly and make immediate adjustments if it looked like it might become misaligned.

When the 150-horsepower slow-turning John Deere diesel took over, the boat hit 9 knots driving straight into a 25-knot headwind at 2,500 rpm. Cruising speed of 8.2 knots was reached at 1,850 rpm. In economy mode, at 1,300 rpm, the engine sips about one gallon of diesel per hour, pushing the boat along at 6.5 knots. Betty experimented with various propellers, recording rpm, speed, and fuel-efficiency data before settling on a folding four-blade VariFold propeller that produces strong thrust both in forward and reverse and has good stopping power.

In retrospect, calling the Bruckmann 50 a hybrid might be more appropriate than filing it under the staid label of motorsailer. Because for sailors who haven't forgotten about performance and for comfort seekers who are considering a motoryacht, here's a sailboat that offers the best of two worlds.

Dieter Loibner is a former *CW* associate editor.