

Starting Line



That "P" Is for Performance

AFTER HE SAILED HIS NEW Star to a career-best second-place finish in the first race of the 2009 Bacardi Cup, Jon VanderMolen was asked the obvious question. Was it you or the boat?

"I was happy to give the boat the credit," says VanderMolen of his P-Star, a speedy new hull shape quickly winning

converts in the class. "A lot of it was [crew] Geoff Ewenson. But I do believe that boat was the sweet spot."

In 2002, Olympic sailor Marc Pickel, of Germany, a boatbuilder by trade, collaborated with researchers at the University of Kiel to develop a faster Star design. The result, six years later, is the P-Star.

Unlike more modern one-designs, the Star class rule has fairly loose tolerances—up to an inch at certain measurement stations—allowing some design flexibility.

"The basic design idea of the P-Star is to create the longest waterline you can get," says Pickel. "The aft part of the hull is as flat as possible

to reduce wave drag downwind. I guess all this helps the P-Star to perform well."

Pickel might be just a tad modest. VanderMolen, who says he usually finished somewhere in the 20s at the Bacardi Cup, was on track for a top-three finish until he wore down in the final two races and wound up sixth

overall. Pickel finished ninth, while 2003 college sailor of the year Clay Bischoff, sailing his first Star regatta, scored three results in the top 10 sailing a P-Star.

"There's something right about the boat downwind," says Bischoff. "I didn't realize how much opportunity there is to gain on the run,

so having that downwind speed is pretty crucial."

The next step is to bring the P-Star molds to VanderMolen's North American Sailing Center in Richland, Mich. With the Euro so strong, the price of a European-built Star has run as high as \$75,000. By next winter, VanderMolen hopes to deliver the first new

U.S.-built Star since 1993 for less than \$50,000.

"There are very few guys in the U.S., outside of the elite circle of top sailors, buying new boats," says VanderMolen. "It's very hard to attract the younger college hot shots because the cost of the boat is quite prohibitive."

—STUART STREULI

WINDSHIFTS

►► The Royal Ocean Racing Club and the Union National pour la Course au Large, owners of the IRC rule, launched a website dedicated to the ratings system. Highlights include IRC regatta news, certification information, and a section that answers such FAQs as, "Why is the rule secret?" www.ircrating.org

►► US SAILING's announcement of its 2009 U.S. Sailing Team AlphaGraphics revealed two storylines to watch, Andrew Campbell's switch from the Laser to the Star, and the return of 1988 Olympic gold medalist Allison Jolly to the Women's 470. www.ussailing.org

►► The global economic crisis has not spared the world's top regattas. Acura discontinued its sponsorship of Key West Race Week and Miami Grand Prix, Skandia pulled out as title sponsor of Cowes Week, and Antigua Sailing Week lost Stanford Bank. All four events will carry on while organizers search for new title sponsors.

►► Recent Vendée Globe retiree Loïck Peyron will join the Arabian team Oman Sail for the 2009 iShares Cup Extreme 40 Sailing Series. The circuit also added a sixth stop, Almeria, Spain, Oct. 10 to 12. www.omansail.com

►► Sperry Top-Sider will sponsor the inaugural New York YC Invitational Cup. Taking place Sept. 15 to 19 in Newport, R.I., the regatta involves teams from 21 yacht clubs around the world fleet racing in Club Swan 42s. www.nyyc.org

►► The Round Texel Race, which attracts hundreds of catamarans to this Dutch island each year, has undergone an expansion and a name change for 2009. Zwitserleven Sailing Week (June 8 to 13) will include racing not only for catamarans, but also skiffs, kiteboards, windsurfers, and even land yachts. www.roundtexel.com