

BOAT REVIEW: Hunter 216

# Day on the bay



Deceptively simple daysailer suits sail training or family outings, by Vanessa Dudley

**D**ON'T be fooled by the high-sided look and the all-round "bumper boat" rubrail; the Hunter 216 is quite a potent little performer. It was designed by Glenn Henderson, whose Henderson 30 is a high octane sportsboat which is evidently a popular and successful class in the USA.

Not everyone has the sailing skills or budget to race a sportsboat. The 216, on the other hand, is a simple, stable and modestly priced trailable daysailer intended to suit both novices and seasoned sailors.

Since its introduction in the USA in mid-2003, more than 200 216s have been built, making it one of the most successful boat launches for North America's largest sailboat manufacturer.

Matt Hayes of US Yachts, the Australian distributor for Hunter Marine, brought the first 216 into Australia late last year in the belief that it would be ideal for sail training and day charters as well as being

a fun "toy" to have among his Sydney By Sail charter yacht fleet. In March Hayes trailed the boat down to Victoria's Gippsland Lakes for his first Marlay Point Overnight Race. The boat performed well in light airs, finishing fourth overall in its division.

On first impressions the Hunter 216 seems to be all cockpit, providing plenty of space for up to six people, though it does also have a cuddy cabin with space for a portable head and a vee-berth with storage.

The lead keel is lifted by pumping an hydraulic cylinder. The rudder setup is interesting, with a patented VARA (variable aspect rudder assembly) arrangement which houses a high aspect lifting rudder blade within a gasket which rotates on two sets of bearings.

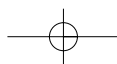
## Thermoformed hull

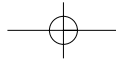
Construction is by Hunter's patented Advanced Composite Process (ACP),

which combines thermoformed UV protected plastic, fibreglass mat and injected foam. Hunter Marine says the goal is to provide a tough, almost maintenance-free hull that is virtually unsinkable. Hunter says the 216 is the largest thermoformed boat in the world.

The outer layer of ACP is a BASF plastic called Luran-S, which the manufacturer says will never develop crazing and if scratched can be sanded out and buffed back to nearly new finish. The high density urethane foam adds stiffness and impact resistance, with overall strength added by the layer of knitted biaxial fibreglass bonded inside the foam.

The idea is that when an ACP boat is struck by an impact, the outer skin will flex slightly to absorb the energy, rather than breaking, the foam will diffuse the impact energy through a large area and the fibreglass backing will hold the structure intact. The foam backing also provides enough positive flotation to





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ABOVE: Simple, open cockpit, housing gasket for the rudder (Vanessa Dudley pictures).



Basic interior, looking forward from the hatch.

make the boat unsinkable in the unlikely event of the boat becoming completely filled with water, Hunter says.

**Simple and swift**


We sailed the 216 three-up on Sydney Harbour in a cranking 15-20kt north-easterly seabreeze.

This is definitely an easy boat to sail, with plenty of space in the cockpit and a feeling of protection from the high coamings, which will be reassuring for novices. There is only a limited number of sail adjustments possible with the simple rig, which could prove frustrating for

experienced sailors looking for more performance, but if you are happy to relax and take it easy, the overall handling and performance is lively and effortlessly achieved.

Of course we had to try the optional spinnaker kit with asymmetrical sail and retractable carbon fibre bowsprit. This had the 216 surging along downhill; eventually disaster struck when we gybed and the kite filled before we'd completed the turn, sending us into a

round-up which I tried to avert by letting the mainsheet run. With no backstay, the top of the mast was tugged forward by the spinnaker and the mast inverted.

No permanent damage was done, as Hayes was able to unstep the mast and straighten it again back on shore. I had noticed that the shrouds were quite loose in the boat before the fateful gybe. Since setting the rig up with a lot more tension, Hayes says there have been no further problems with the rig. 

**Specifications**

Length overall .....	6.55m	Towing weight .....	840kg
Waterline length .....	5.72m	Weight (Loaded) .....	1294kg
Beam maximum .....	2.41m	Sail area .....	23.41sq m
Draft .....	0.31-1.07m	Mast height .....	9.42m
Weight .....	613kg	Base price (on trailer): .....	\$31,000

**Construction:** Hunter's patented Advanced Composite Process (ACP) combines thermoformed UV-protected plastic, fibreglass mat and injected foam.

**Keel:** Cast lead centerboard w/hydraulic lift system.

**Rudder:** Inboard VARA rudder system with easy-lift rudder

**Engine:** Outboard to maximum 4hp.

**Designer:** Glenn Henderson

**Builder:** Hunter Yachts.

**Importer:** US Yachts, Darling Harbour, NSW, tel (02) 9281 4422;

Website: www.usyachts.com.au.

