

# Getting close to the Edge

Taking on the mighty MacGregor 26 and the European power-sailers is a new contender from America: Legend's 27 Edge. David Harding reports

Until now, choosing a power-sailer has been easy. If you've wanted something light, simple and inexpensive, the MacGregor 26 has been the obvious choice. More luxury and a bigger engine? Then the Imexus has been your boat. A proper sailing boat that can also plane under power? That's the Tide 28.

The three are so different that they have complemented rather than competed with each other, broadening the market for power-sailers by catering for a wide range of preferences.

Now, however, things have become more complicated because power-sailer number four has arrived – and this time there's no virgin territory left. Nonetheless, as the Edge comes from one of America's leading production builders, Luhrs Marine, plenty of homework will have been done to make sure the boat offers something the others don't.

Whatever the differences, there will be inevitable similarities between trailable boats that can motor at planing speeds and still sail well enough to keep their owners happy. The need to plane reasonably level with a large outboard on the stern and a crew in the cockpit means a lot of buoyancy right aft, coupled with minimal rocker – and it's hard to square this combination with good sailing performance. That's why the 50:50 power-sailers tend to look rather incongruous.

In common with her two main competitors (the Mac and Imexus) the Edge has bold, angular styling, and the water-ballast tank beneath the saloon leads to plenty of freeboard and coachroof height for

standing headroom below decks. A short rig is another power-sailer trait because of the limited righting moment, though Legend has chosen a low aspect-ratio mainsail with a pronounced roach to combine efficiency from a modest area with a low centre of effort.

## Optimised for trailing

By power-sailer standards, Legend has done nothing radical with the Edge. Her hull length of 26ft 4in (8.02m) places her between the Mac and the Imexus, but at 8ft 4in (2.54m) she's beamier, taking full advantage of the European maximum for trailing.

She weighs more, too, with a heavier hull and 77kg (170lb) in a centreboard whose tip is 5ft 11in (1.80m) below the surface. That's a lot of draught for a 26-footer.

Looking closely at the Edge you

begin to see some more subtle differences. There's a spray-rail incorporated in a chine that runs from half-way aft to the transom to maximise lift at planing speeds under power. The hull appears to be more rounded, creating a deeper canoe body. And whereas the Mac and Imexus both have twin, transom-hung rudders, the Edge (like the Tide) has an inboard blade that drops through a cassette in the bottom of the hull. This keeps the transom clearer for boarding – no bad thing when there's already a 75hp outboard in the middle – and a rudder with an immersed root is more efficient than a transom-hung alternative.

Below decks the finish is simple, yet not too stark, and there's plenty of room. It's clear that Legend has put a good deal of thought into this new boat.

## Powered performance

As we had to motor out of the marina for our test – and that revealed nothing untoward on the manoeuvring front – it made sense to leave the sails down and conduct our motoring trials first. Unlike MacGregor and Imexus, Legend warn of dire consequences if you use the boat un-ballasted even under power – but we chose to take the risk, opening the ballast tank's bung in the stern as we opened the throttle to empty the 1,600lb (725kg) of water back into the sea. Stability is naturally reduced like this, so you wouldn't want to have too many people on one side or take large seas on the beam, but my interpretation would be that sensible behaviour shouldn't place you in peril.

With the Evinrude Etec engine



LEGEND 27 EDGE: 8.02m (26ft 4in) power-sailer



The jib sheet's cleat, and the clutches, are forward of the starboard winch. Boats sold in the UK will have modified hardware

PRICE: £12,995 (excl. outboard)

reaching 5,000rpm we saw our speed climb to 17.5 knots with two of us aboard. The weight of one person on the forward berth brought the bow down slightly and we picked up to 18 knots. Although the engine reached its designed revs and the speed was what Legend claimed (19.9mph is 17.3 knots), the boat always ran with a bow-up attitude so the hull was out of the water back to the mast, whereas the Mac and Imexus are more level at speed and therefore present the more rounded forward sections of the hull to the waves. Reducing the revs to 4,300 gave a comfortable 13.5 knots.

As on the other water-ballasted trailer-sailers, filling the tank is a

matter of stopping the boat and opening the bung in the stern. Then you open the seacock in the vent pipe to let the air out, or simply open the inspection hatch in the top of the tank beneath the companionway steps, which you do anyway to make sure the tank

is full.

The boat felt a good deal steadier with a belly full of ballast, this time peaking at just under 16 knots – surprisingly close to her un-ballasted speed.

As on any power-sailer, bouncing over waves sets the rig rattling in a rather un-nerving manner. I wouldn't want to power into a seaway for long – not that you could motor anywhere for long at full throttle, because you can almost see the

fuel level dropping. Evinrude's figures give a consumption of 6.2 (imperial) gallons (28lt) per hour at 5,000rpm, so a 5gal (23lt) tank should last about 45 minutes. Easing back on the throttle will take you much further.

### Sailing ability

Power trials complete, it was time to lift the engine, lower the centreplate on its 2:1 purchase, drop the rudder through its cassette under the helmsman's seat, and set sail. Given that we were pushing her a bit, sailing under full canvas in 15-18 knots of breeze, the boat coped well, making around 4.5 knots and tacking through 120°. We had to work to keep her on her feet, but then many owners might have chosen to reef in those conditions – if they chose to sail upwind at all.

The trouble is that the single reef removes about 40% of the main's area. If you're half serious about sailing it would be worth having a second, shallower reef put in.

Where the Edge differs most notably from her principal competitors is in control when hard pressed. She made relatively little leeway even when well heeled and the rudder continued to grip until the water was lapping the bottom of the window. Watching her from the weather side while taking the photos I could see that the root of the rudder remained immersed up to about 40° of heel. When it lost grip all that followed was the gentlest of rounding-ups.

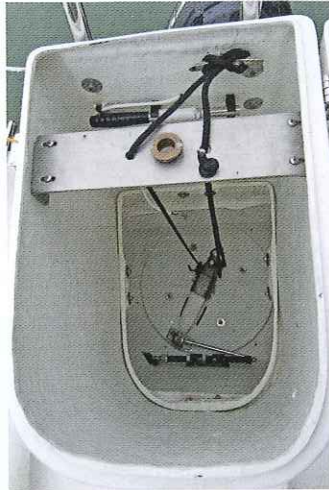
Whether or not the Edge is faster all round under sail than the lighter and more generously-canvassed MacGregor, there's no disputing her composure

There's no disputing her composure when hard pressed





The rudder in its raised position...



...and lowered into its cassette

by power-sailer standards. She was prepared to make upwind gently under main only; to heave to; and to turn through 360° with the sheets pinned in if sent into a tack first. Largely because of their minimal rocker, all three 50:50 power-sailers tack deliberately and the Edge is no different. You need to build up a good head of steam before putting the helm down firmly, making sure the bow is not about to get knocked off by the next wave.

The main factor spoiling the sailing experience was the steering. As on the Mac and Imexus, the wheel is linked to both the rudder and the outboard. When the boat heels, the weight of the outboard puts pressure on the steering cables and tries to turn the rudder so you feel as though you're having to counter pronounced lee helm. On the Edge the steering was not only heavy but also extremely stiff and

lumpy, making sailing seriously hard work. Apart from the problems inherent in such a system, I suspect there might have been something amiss with the mechanism on this particular boat.

I would be tempted to disconnect the engine from the steering when under sail, so the wheel turns only the rudder. That's something the builders are now looking into. In the meantime, any boats sold in the UK will be fitted with a means of disconnection.

Before using the emergency tiller (it needed a few modifications on our test boat), you use a socket spanner on a long extension bar to undo the bolt that joins the engine's linkage to the top of the rudder cassette; otherwise the weight and friction together would be too great for the tiller. It would be too fiddly to do as a matter of routine when sailing.

Something else I would want to change is the jib's sheeting

arrangement. The Edge is not alone among American trailer-sailers in having cam cleats forward of the winches – single-speed Lewmar 6s in this case. When there's more than minimal load in the jib you can only release the sheet from the cleat by taking the weight on the winch first: if you need to release it in a hurry and it's not around the winch, you can't. Replacing the cam cleat with a Spinlock PX to allow release under load would be the simplest answer, and that's now going to be done on future boats.

As standard, the main halyard, kicking strap and topping lift are all at the mast; ostensibly because that makes it easier to lower and raise the rig, though I suspect it's primarily to keep deck hardware to a minimum. Boats sold in the UK will be offered with them led aft.

### On deck under sail

This isn't the sort of boat on which you're likely to spend much time on deck when heeled under sail.

If you do venture forward, there's plenty to hold on to on the windward side, including the stainless steel mast-stabilising struts used on many Legends that run from the deck to above the gooseneck each side. To leeward, you can brace your feet against the raised lip along the edge of the coachroof; for security this lip really needs to be twice as high. Prominent 'No Step' notices discourage you from putting any weight on the separate moulding that forms an overhanging lip at the forward end of the coachroof and around each side. Harder to avoid might be the glands for the electric cables emerging from the base of the mast: they could easily



A 12V cooler box lives between the aft berth and the galley, whose worktop is unusually low

act as trip-wires for unwary feet.

While on deck I noticed the boom bending more than I would have expected given the relatively low tension on the kicker.

The headsail roller-reefing system with a plastic headfoil is by Hood. Plastic is less prone to damage than aluminium, an important point on a boat whose mast is designed for easy raising and lowering. Spars are by US Spars and sails by Doyle. The two top battens in the mainsail are full length, yet plastic luff slides are used throughout so the sail has to be pulled down once you've released the halyard. Deck cleats

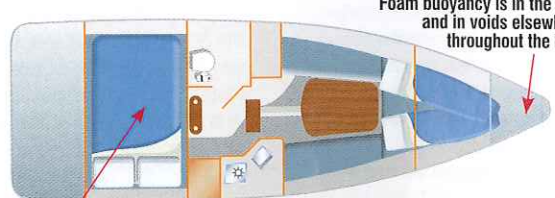
## Legend 27 Edge data

<b>LOA</b>	8.03m (26ft 4in)
<b>LWL</b>	7.37m (24ft 2in)
<b>Beam</b>	2.54m (8ft 4in)
<b>Draught – board up</b>	0.46m (1ft 6in)
<b>Draught – board down</b>	1.80m (5ft 11in)
<b>Weight including all ballast</b>	2,513kg (5,540lb)
<b>Water ballast</b>	726kg (1,600lb)
<b>Sail area</b>	30.94sq m (333sq ft)
<b>RCD category</b>	C
<b>Engine</b>	Outboard up to 75hp
<b>Headroom under hatch</b>	1.80m (5ft 11in)
<b>Designer and builder</b>	Luhrs Marine, USA

### Distributors

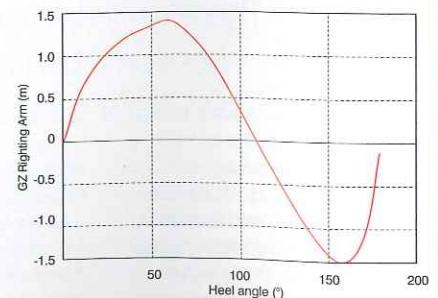
South – Sparkes Marine Agency. Tel: 02392 460018  
 www.sparkesmarineagency.co.uk  
 North – Total Sailing. Tel: 01539 488831  
 www.totalsailing.co.uk

A short mast keeps the rig's centre of effort low



The aft berth is 2.28m by 1.52m (7ft 6in by 5ft)

Lifted by a 2:1 purchase on the deck, the centreboard weighs 77kg (170lb)



The GZ curve shows the maximum righting moment at 57° and the angle of vanishing stability (AVS) at 110°



An open-plan interior, formed by a full internal moulding and with the water-ballast tank beneath the sole

are on the small side; just big enough for one 12mm rope, so you have to improvise if rigging up springs as well as breast lines. Bigger ones are promised for boats sold in the UK.

Back in the cockpit you find space for a fuel tank under a lifting section of the seat each side. Lips in the cockpit sole stop them sliding across when the boat heels. As on the MacGregor, there's no locker space so everything else has to go down below unless you put the fenders in storage racks on the stern rail. A sensible touch is a mini solar panel on the quarter to put a trickle charge into the battery.

**Down below**

As on many American boats, the Edge has a wide companionway. It's closed off by a neat and sturdy hatch that folds back on itself and then hinges up on a gas strut. Storage for the washboards is provided by net bags on the heads bulkhead next to the reassuringly solid stainless steel steps with their well-roughened tread.

The initial impression is of a pleasant feel for a budget-priced boat. It's less plasticky than the Legend 25, for example, despite the full interior moulding. Carpet covers the hull-sides and most of the headlining is in the soft, stretched fabric that Legend uses on some larger models. This also allows access to the deckhead, though removable panels are in the moulded headliner further aft.

The minimal timber trim is simply finished. An unusual but effective detail is the visible end-grain of the plywood on the table, doors, bulkheads and joinery units. It has simply been rounded and varnished; made into a feature rather than edged with something that would more than likely start to peel and look tatty after a year or two.

Black plastic trims cover the window cut-outs in the coachroof and blinds can be dropped down at night.

Stowage is beneath the settee berths each side and the athwartships seat forward of the twin-leaf table. A PTFE water tank is under the aft end of the 2m (6ft 6in) V berth. Right in the bow is foam that forms part of the positive buoyancy. It's hard to see where the rest of the foam is hidden. At the aft end of the port settee is a chart table (45 x 65cm/18 x 26in) and a locker beneath. Aft of this is the heads compartment with a chemical loo or the option of a plumbed-in sea toilet, but no sink or provision for hanging wet-gear (hooks are due to be added). The galley is to starboard, its work-top just 77cm (2ft 6in) above the sole. It's good to see full-length piano hinges on the table's leaves and the heads door.

In the stern, abaft the companionway steps beneath the cockpit, is a large double berth

(1.52m by 2.28m/5ft x 7ft 6in). A bulkhead with a couple of access panels separates the berth from a compartment in the stern that accommodates the holding tank and multi-way valve to port and, the other side of the rudder, the seacocks (tucked away beneath the batteries) and battery charger.

Reaching some of the service points would call for a degree of double-jointedness.

Headroom is 1.8m (5ft 11in) by the companionway. Lighting is in the form of just four lights, all overhead. Some reading lights would be vital.

Visible end-grain made into a feature is an unusual detail

**PBO's verdict**

This new Legend warrants close inspection if you're in the market for a power-sailer, unless you need the economy of the Mac or prefer the sailing ability of the Tide.

Performance passes muster under both power and sail, steering problems notwithstanding. Some fittings look and feel light and there's plenty to suggest that the Edge is designed with American priorities in mind: for example, I would willingly sacrifice the shower on the stern for some upgraded fittings above decks and more lighting below. Nonetheless, this is a competent and well-researched new entry in the power-sailer market that will give the other builders something to think about.



Other boats to look at



**MacGregor 26M**

PRICE: £23,400 inc. engine  
TESTED: JULY 2007

MacGregor's second-generation power-sailer is lighter than the other water-ballasted designs, running with a 50hp outboard. She carries more sail and is the least expensive.

www.macgregoruk.com



**Imexus 28**

PRICE: £28,536 excl. engine  
TESTED: JANUARY 2008

Probably not as fast as her competitors under sail, the Imexus is the most reassuring in terms of finish and fittings and has more locker space. Outboard or inboard options.

www.wittemarine.com



**Tide 28**

PRICE: £39,950 excl. engine  
TESTED: JULY 2007

Geared much more towards sailing than the other two, the Tide is light, narrow and not especially stiff for her length - but she goes well and has crossed the Atlantic

www.tide28.com

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