



## Hunter 45 Centre Cockpit

Text by Brent Hyde, Images: Hunter Marine

When I walked into the Sydney By Sail office on the festival pontoon in Darling Harbour, it was clear customer service was a major focus. Looking around the walls, there were many awards displaying recognition of this fact, a testimony to Matt Hayes and his team who place service at the forefront of their operation. Founded in 1995 by Olympic yachtsman Matt Hayes, Sydney By Sail offers a varied menu of sailing activities from sailing tours to tuition, corporate charters and team building. Matt started using Hunter Yachts for his charter fleet and was so impressed he became the Hunter dealer in 2003. The dealership trades under the name of US Yachts and is the sister company to Sydney By Sail. There are great synergies with both Matt's companies allowing use of expert maintenance staff and access to a large pool of skippers. The services of these skippers are often included at no extra cost to customers of Hunter yachts in areas such as sail training, boat deliveries and valet service. The quality of the boats suited the needs and rigors of the charter business and Matt quickly learned these same attributes were noticed by clients looking

for an easily managed, quality sail boat that offered little in the way of compromise to performance, stability and comfort.

When someone mentions production boat, shudders sometimes tingle the spine and I was no different. Couple the production boat tag with the centre cockpit version to be tested and I was intrigued to see what my first impression would be. Stepping along side the Hunter 45CC it was not immediately obvious it was a centre cockpit boat. Perhaps I had not been paying much attention as I walked the length of the boat checking for imperfections in the hull (none found) and admiring the sleek but warm lines the Hunter had. My pre conceived thought was the centre cockpit would impose itself, inhibit the functionality of the deck and take away useable space below. Well, I was wrong and again told myself not to pre judge anything until you have seen it up close and personal.

Instantly relaxing in the centre cockpit, I began to observe the deck layout. I felt safe and secure in this spacious semi enclosed area. A bimini protected the entire cockpit and is easily removed if you want to gain full view of the main. Flexi Teak cockpit seats made



through any demanding sail tests. Matt used all his local knowledge and years on the water to track down some favourable wind pockets to give a taste of what the Hunter could do under sail. Hoisting the main from the boom sail bag, unfurling the headsail and cutting the quiet Yanmar engine, we put the boat through a series of tacks and turns. Even in the lighter conditions, the Hunter 45CC glided with ease, felt stable and responsive. At the helm I noticed very little effort was required to manoeuvre and the turning radius was impressively tight. Matt stated, with the B & R rig primarily being mainsail driven, weather helm was minimal and rounding up in rougher conditions could be more controlled. Performance is not sacrificed and if the get up and go in the lighter airs was any indication, the Hunter 45CC will match other boats on the weekend racing circuit. To get a better appreciation of its offshore ability, I chatted to Mark Mawby who had joined us from Perth. Mark has sailed on many Hunters and recently took a Hunter 45CC from Perth to Busstelton. Mark set off in winds varying between 15 to 25 knots NW with seas running around 3 metres. Under full main and headsail, Mark did not have to make any major adjustments to the sails and they cruised between 7.5 and 9.5 knots on their overnight run. With no dodger, the cockpit remained dry and to their delight a comfortable ride.

Back at the dock I ventured below to the open and airy salon. Galley to starboard included an under bench fridge and separated freezer plus an additional bench top opening freezer. A large microwave, 3 burner gas hobs and oven would enable plenty of gourmet meals to be produced. Corian tops with a large double stainless sink, very large garbage bin and a unique dish drying cabinet completed the very functional galley. Looking forward to port, the drop down dining table was surrounded by an L shaped settee that can double as an extra berth. To starboard, another settee is suitable for a single berth. A flat screen LCD screen on the forward port bulkhead can be used

it comfortable to lounge around and they added a nice contrast to the white hull and deck. Cockpit cushions can be added for extra comfort. Sitting in the cockpit was a pleasure as the coaming almost moulded to your back. With four of us in the centre cockpit, there was still plenty of room for two or three more. The folding Lewmar wheel enabled you to walk past the pedestal console with ease. Call it trendy, but I liked the cup holders and fold out cockpit table attached to the pedestal. I likened the centre cockpit to the patio at home where you retreat for a little relaxation or to enjoy some social interaction with friends. A unique feature of the Hunter Yachts is the patent pending Traveler Arch which keeps the cockpit clear of any unnecessary lines and hardware. Not having to worry about the boom whipping your head off in an unexpected jibe was a nice safety feature. The B & R rig (Bergstrom & Ridder) eliminates the backstay and allows for a greater roach in the mainsail and takes the clutter from the stern.

Space on deck is plentiful. Looking towards the stern, I noticed a port and starboard Flexi Teak seat in each corner (with cup holders). A nice touch added to enjoy the view while sailing or just to sit and enjoy the cocktail of the day. Deck space on top of the aft cabin was uncluttered. A small swim step accessed via almost vertical steps on the stern makes a functional platform for getting in and out of the water, putting on dive tanks or hopping into the tender. A fold out swim ladder was located to starboard on the swim step. Walking forward on the non skid decks there were enough points to hang onto and a solid feel to the stanchions and life lines. At sea or in rougher conditions, staying safe and attached would not be an issue. A large anchor well housed the chain and anchor warp with an electric winch neatly tucked inside the well. All lines and halyards run aft to the cockpit through jam cleats. An electric halyard winch is a civilised touch.

Sydney Harbour was in near perfect condition, sadly though more like the early Louis Vitton races in Valencia, very little wind and difficult to put the Hunter 45CC





to watch favourite programs or view navigation data. A Bose sound system added to the entertainment factor on board. Courtesy lights are throughout the boat around the floor for after dark illumination.

To port and under the companionway steps, the Yanmar engine is housed and very easily accessed. Facilities for a generator and air conditioning are in place if these are requested additions. Opposite is a cabinet designed to take a washer/drier if desired. Also to port is the navigation centre with a very comfortable helm seat. Plenty of room to peruse charts or plot the next adventure.

A focal point is the aft master stateroom. A queen island bed takes centre stage. An ensuite head and shower to pamper yourself is also a feature. Two adequate cedar-lined hanging lockers are complimented by large amounts of drawer and under bed storage. A nice settee is to port. Twin night stands, a vanity table and mirror make you feel as comfortable as being in a quality hotel.

In the bow section is the forward guest room. Another head and shower ensuite and a double V berth make this a cosy room. Again, plenty of room to stow clothes and equipment.

The interior was finished in teak with a laminate sole. Later models are being finished in cherry wood. Screens and blinds are fitted to cover the hatches and the whole area below is well thought out with attention paid to utilising the space efficiently.

For anyone wishing to make the transition from power to sail, the Hunter 45CC will not disappoint. The ease of handling the Hunter would not deter those new to sailing and with the boat truly capable of offshore passages, new adventures can be undertaken.

Matt Hayes has taken his extensive sailing experience and has chosen to represent a boat that is worthy of his years as a sailor. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

Length Overall	45'0" 13.72 m
Hull Length	42'2" 12.83 m
Waterline Length	39'2" 11.94 m
Beam	14'6" 4.42 m
Draft – Shoal	5'0" 1.52 m
Draft – Deep	6'6" 1.98 m
Displacement	22,936 lbs 10,404 kg
Ballast – Shoal	7,389 lbs 3,355 kg
Ballast – Deep	7,237 lbs 3,286 kg
Mast Height – Standard	57'4" 17.48 m
Sail Area – Actual (Standard)	962 ft sq 89 m sq
Headroom	6'9" 2.06 m
Auxiliary Power (Yanmar)	75 HPI 56 kW