



BOAT REVIEW: AUSTRAL CLUBMAN SUPER 30

Welcome to the Club

Australian company Austral Yachts has brought some 30 years of experience with trailerable yachts to meet the challenge of developing a fast, modern offshore and club racer. The result is a very impressive package, reports Vanessa Dudley.

There's something special about crossing the finish line of a mixed fleet race amongst boats much bigger than the one you're on. If that performance translates into success on handicap, so much the better. And if there are other boats of the same type offering one-design racing within the race, it's even better still.

Fast boats which have nice roomy cockpits and good deck layouts, making them fun to race around the buoys, while also having the capability to be raced offshore... That's the potential package which has attracted keen racing sailors to classes like the Mumm 30

and the Mount Gay 30 in recent years.

Sure, it can be mighty uncomfortable on a boat of this size in rough weather, but not everyone's got the budget for a bigger racing boat, and at the end of a passage race it can be a lot easier, quicker and cheaper to truck the small boat home than to organise a bigger boat's sea delivery, typically into headwinds.

Austral Yachts' new Clubman Super 30 takes the road transport option a step further, with its retractable keel and rudder offering true trailerability behind a towing vehicle such as a 2.6lt turbo diesel Land Rover utility.

The Adelaide family company, founded by Adrian and Sue Keough and now run by their eldest son, Michael, has been in the trailer sailer game since the early 1970s. While early models like the Austral 20 look dated now, the company moved with the times in introducing the Austral Clubman 8, a successful trailerable yacht designed by Scott Jutson.

Now Austral has brought forward all of that experience to develop some very innovative solutions to the challenge of producing an exciting, modern all-rounder with offshore capability. The result, in my opinion, is a boat which really is "the goods".





"I can say with authority that this is a tough boat with a bulletproof rig."

Above: Clubman racing at Geelong's Festival of Sail in January. Left: Deck layout is clean and uncluttered for trimming and steering.

We also competed in the 1997 Gosford to Lord Howe Island Race, finishing amongst the 40-footers in what was mostly a close-hauled fetch in moderate airs. The return delivery was quite an experience, with strong northerly winds gusting up to 40-45kt and stirring up a big, nasty beam sea. In those testing conditions the Mount Gay 30 design proved itself as tough and seaworthy. It was a small boat in which to go through those conditions, but it never once let us down.

The reason I mention all of this is that stepping aboard the Clubman Super 30 felt just like getting back onboard that tough little Mount Gay 30, and I again came away impressed. Even more so in this case, because of the intelligent modifications which have modernised the rig and added trailerability.

SAILING PERFORMANCE

Because people who will be interested in the Clubman Super 30 will be curious first and foremost about how it performs, I'll cut to the chase. This test was carried out on the first boat to be launched, Dr Geoff Vercoe's *Clubman*. Vercoe is a very experienced offshore yachtsman who previously campaigned the Jutson 42 *Maglieri Wines* both locally in Adelaide and further afield.

The occasion was the Quin's Blue Water Classic Adelaide to Port Lincoln Race, a 160nm overnighter. After a light air beat down the coast to Henley, we sailed on a long port tack fetch towards the first turning point. The breeze was gusting from 18-25kt and we changed down from the No 1 to the No 4 jib and full

Three different designs (Jutson, David Lyons and Murray/Burns/Dovell) hit the water in Sydney in the mid '90s and although the fleet size never quite reached 'critical mass' for true class racing, the boats were very active in both the JOG Super 30 class and the general offshore circuit, including passage races to Southport and Mooloolaba and Hamilton Island Race Week.

Ray Stone even entered his boat in the Sydney to Hobart Race, successfully completing the 1996 event which — fortunately for the comfort of his crew — included a fast downhill slide across the Bass Strait "paddock".

I count myself as fortunate to have enjoyed a season or two of great racing aboard a rival Mount Gay 30, Nigel Holman's Lyons-designed *Team Fujitsu Cuckoo's Nest*. The boat was tremendous fun to sail around the buoys and provided some wildly exciting downhill runs.

MOUNT GAY HERITAGE

The Austral Clubman Super 30 is a development of Scott Jutson's Mount Gay 30 design, of which three were built, the most successful being Ray Stone's *Razor's Edge*.

Austral Yachts acquired those moulds and, with Jutson, set about redesigning the interior and deck layouts, the appendages and the rig to produce the Clubman Super 30.

It's worth taking a look at where the new boat has come from, because its pedigree is impressive. The Mount Gay 30 class concept was for a 31ft LOA offshore racing yacht designed to a 'box' rule similar in concept to the Whitbread (now Volvo Ocean Race) rule. The aim was for an exciting, high performance but also robust craft meeting the structural requirements for ABS. A water ballast system was included, but could only be operated by hand pump.



Building a new Club



Building the deck mould for the Clubman 36, in front of the first hull (upturned). Joe Mezzini (left) with Austral Yachts Managing Director Michael Keough.

Michael Keough muses that after all the thought, time and investment that go into setting up to produce a new design, the market takes at least a year to 18 months to decide if the resulting yacht is any good.

That has not deterred him from pushing ahead to make moulds for a new Jutson-designed Clubman 36, intended primarily as a club racer/cruiser.

The plug for the hull mould has been built accurately to provide the first Clubman 36 for Adelaide yachtsman Joe Mezzini and his wife

Maria. Joe came to sailing in his mid-30s and loves it with a passion; he says he learnt most of what he knows the hard way aboard his previous boat, an Austral Clubman 8, which was a challenging but also forgiving vehicle for a P-plate driver.

Now he is keen to do more, with a boat which



has more interior room and comfort, but which also offers racing performance. Scott Jutson describes his brief as integrating "the performance necessities (high-performance composite foils, close sheeting angles and ergonomic cockpit layout to name a few) with a high volume comfortable interior."

Like the Clubman Super 30, the 36 will have a carbon-fibre mast with swept-back spreaders, non-overlapping headsails and no running backstays.

"Our experience in this area is now producing some of the most easily tuned performance packages which are also capable of withstanding the toughest Hobart, Jutson writes.

Specifications are 11m LOA, 3.5m beam, 2.16m draft, 3950kg displacement. Like the smaller Clubman Super 30, construction is PVC-cored high-performance E-glass laminates with carbon rudder and lead-bulbed cast iron keel, all to ABS.

Keough and Mezzini are working towards a June launching.

main (headsails are non-overlapping with around 107% LP measurement).

The water ballast system incorporated in the Mount Gay 30 has not been carried over to the new boat and performance noticeably dropped as soon as crew weight came off the rail on this angle of sail. We were sailing eight-up, one more than the boat's normal crew complement. Boat speed was in the 8-9kt range, footing rather than pinching. We clung on to the tail of the larger boats but it was a wet and bouncy ride, undeniably the angle where you know you're on a low-wooded little boat.

At Marion Reef we were able to bear off onto a two-sail reach, and soon it was time to set the high-clewed reacher, an awesomely powerful sail which carted us along at 10-14kts at a true wind angle of 80° or higher.

Then the real fun began, with the angle freeing sufficiently to set a spinnaker for the long run northwest from Cape Spencer towards Dangerous Reef and Port Lincoln.

HIGH PRESSURE TEST

The boat is equipped with both asymmetrical and symmetrical spinnakers, using a dual-purpose carbon fibre pole as a bowsprit for the former and a conventional set-up for the latter.

We set a symmetrical masthead spinnaker and shot off at exhilarating speeds of 10-16kt. The sea was quite flat, but the breeze was still gusting up to the high 20s at times and at this point there's a confession I have to make. It was me steering when we broached twice to windward and once through a nasty gybe to leeward.

I'd like to say that it was all just part of the boat tester's repertoire, to put the yacht to the ultimate pressure test. In truth it was a case of waning concentration and too much Araldite on



the hands to have the good sense to pass on the helm at the appropriate stage.

As a result, though, I can say with authority that this is a tough boat with a bulletproof rig. We laid the boat over on both sides, crash-gybed the boom and flogged the hell out of that big spinnaker. When the dust settled, the only carnage was a snapped downhaul/kicker control line for the spinnaker pole. Everything else was A-okay.

Thank goodness for runnerless rigs with swept-back spreaders; in this case a set of good-looking carbon-fibre spars from Melbourne company Applied Composites.

Steering this boat with a tiller is an absolute pleasure upwind and a lot of fun downwind too, until you hit the 'danger zone'. The helm is quite forgiving but it does load up, especially at slower speeds when a quarter sea kicks up

Owner of the first Clubman Super 30, experienced offshore yachtsman Dr Geoff Vercoe, prepares a hot breakfast over the stove in the basic galley.

Highs

Big, open cockpit with well-considered deck layout is a dream come true for keen racers more used to cramped and cluttered cruiser/racer cockpits.

High downwind speeds are easy to achieve, and if you lose it there are no runners to pin the boom down and turn the broach into a complete disaster.

You can tow and launch it like a sportsyacht.

Lows

Sailing upwind into a lumpy sea is wet and uncomfortable. That's when you know you're on a 30ft racer, not a 50ft cruiser.



under one side of the stern or the other. Suddenly you're struggling with the helm and looking for someone experienced riding shotgun on the other side of the cockpit to either push or pull that tiller, depending on which way the bow is diving and the boat is heeling. In my experience it's the same on any modern tiller-steered boat; that's the price you pay for the many advantages of having a tiller.

The Clubman never showed any tendency to plough her bow under while running, although it must be said that the seas weren't big.

So how did we go overall? We were 14th boat over the finish line and seventh overall under the IRC handicap system. Our elapsed time was 19 hours and five minutes and we were beaten by the Mumm 30 *On The Edge*, skippered by the wily Chris Tillett with a hot crew, by about 55 minutes across the line and half-an-hour on corrected time, against their second overall.

On The Edge is the current national champion Mumm 30 and although *Clubman* has managed to come out on top in a club race or two so far, there is a way to go yet before the Clubman Super 30 can make any serious claim to superiority in performance over the longer-established Mumm 30 class.

It may, however, prove to be a more versatile all-rounder when its offshore and trailerable capabilities are thrown into the mix.

NICE FEATURES

The Clubman Super 30 has been designed and built to rate under IMS, IRC and IRM handicap systems and both Austral Yachts and Geoff Vercoe are hoping that

Clockwise from above: *Clubman* racing in Port Lincoln, normal crew number is seven; Keel housing arrangement allows the boat to be trailed to and from regattas; Interior is simple, clean and functional enough for overnighters and longer passages like, say, the Sydney-Southport Race.

one-design fleet racing will also develop.

Construction is in Divinycell PVC cored laminates, using E-glass cloth and vinylester resin, to American Bureau of Shipping standards. The keel is a cast iron foil with a lead bulb, while the rudder stock and blade are carbon fibre. The design meets IMS headroom and accommodation requirements and *Clubman* is set up to be offshore capable to Category 1 regulations.

Harken deck gear is used throughout and careful thought has been applied to the positioning of halyards and control lines, which are run internally wherever possible.

The boat is equipped with a 12hp Bukh inboard diesel engine with saildrive in the standard position under the companionway. The layout has sail stowage and toilet in the forepeak, settee berths with backrests in the saloon, two large quarter areas with sea berths, plus a central galley with small sink, two-burner stove and cabin table with drop-leaf extensions on either side.

The whole cabin table moulding hinges forward to allow access to the keel box, using a special frame to winch the keel up for road transport. The rudder, meanwhile, is mounted within a cassette box which can be lifted out of the cockpit floor.

Austral Yachts is promoting the boat as not only trailerable, but also fully capable of being launched by ramp rather than a crane or travelift. So far, *Clubman* has been trailed from Adelaide to Airlie Beach for the Hahn Premium Race Week at Hamilton Island, and to Geelong for the Bundaberg Rum Festival of Sail. On both occasions the boat was put into the water like a sportsyacht, with only the mast needing to be stepped by crane.

Austral 30

Price as Tested

Approx \$198,000

Options Fitted

Racing sail wardrobe by Ray Brown; Brookes & Gatehouse navigation and wind instrumentation; Category 3 safety equipment, etc

Priced From

\$165,000 (without sails or instruments)

General

Material: . . . E-glass/Vinylester/PVC foam sandwich
 Type: Monohull
 Length (overall): 9.50m
 Beam: 3.29m
 Draft: 2.1m
 Displacement (half load): . . 2300kg

Capacities

Berths: Six
 Fuel: 20lt
 Water: 100lt

Engine

Make/model: . . Bukh 12.8hp diesel with saildrive and two-bladed, geared, folding Gori propeller

Rig Measurements

P: 12.6m
 E: 4.5m
 J: 3.7m
 I: 12.13m

Supplied by

Austral Yachts Pty Ltd, Hackham (SA), tel (08) 83849 5487.

