Salona 35

The first of the new Salona 35 line to race in the UK took last autumn's Garmin Hamble Winter Series by storm, winning three races and scoring only one result outside the top four, to win the class by five points. **Rupert Holmes** puts her to the test...

alona has been building boats in Split, Croatia for around 10 years and the 35 is a significantly updated version of the existing J&J-designed Salona 34 that has already seen a degree of success under IRC. The new boat has the same hull as the 34, but with an extra foot added to the transom, which extends the effective waterline length at speed.

Concept and layout

The 35 is a dual-purpose IRC-optimised cruiser-racer, especially if the optional Jason Ker-designed keel, as fitted to our test boat, 'VitalEyes', is specified. This is a 2.15m draught blade with no bulb, but with the lead concentrated in the lower part of the foil. While offering less stability than the standard performance keel (which has the same draught, but a large bulb) there's less drag, and reduced pitching with the blade keel and a rating benefit. The 2012 TCF was a favourable 1.001.

On deck differences include a change from a single wheel to twin wheels, with the advantage of a walk-though between them and the extended transom also giving a little more space at the helm. There's also an allnew interior with a lot more useable space.

The 35's mouldings are vacuum infused to reduce weight and improve stiffness and impact resistance, but still use eight layers of tri-axial cloth interspersed with rovings as bonding layers to ensure a high degree of stiffness. In the past few years Salona has moved to using a stainless steel frame to spread keel and rig loads, in preference to the galvanised or composite structures used by some competitors. The use of stainless steel allows it to be attached to the hull with a 25mm thick industrial adhesive, which allows the frame to expand and contract as the ambient temperature changes, without stressing the hull.

Carbon fibre is also used on carefully analysed areas of the hull inner liner to help distribute loads, without increasing weight. The hull-deck join is sealed with an industrial adhesive, and is then laminated over internally.

The Jason Ker keel has a fabricated upper section and lead lower half and is around 100kg lighter than the bulb-keel alternatives. Ker positioned the weight fore and aft so that the boat is deliberately trimmed to keep the bow slightly out of the water, with the idea of promoting early planing, and improving control at high speed. When sailing upwind normal trim can be achieved by moving crew weight forward. Other options are a shoal-draught bulb keel (1.5m or 1.75m) and a 2.15m deep performance bulb.

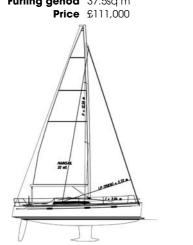
SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 10.4m
LWL 9.16m
Beam 3.36m
Draught 1.5m, 1.75m or 2.15m
Displacement 5,300kg;
Ballast 1,200-1,500kg

 Mainsail
 32sq m

 Furling genoa
 37.5sq m

 Price
 £111.000



Deck and rig

As standard, cruising-oriented features include a full-length toerail and fixed mooring cleats, although the toerail can be lowered as a no-cost option and pop-up cleats fitted. You don't have to look far to see the performance aspects such as towable genoa sheet cars, meaty Harken 46 Radial primary winches, a cascade backstay adjuster, Harken underdeck headsail furler and a carbon pole for symmetric spinnakers.

There are two useful cockpit lockers: the starboard one a decent depth, aft of the heads compartment, plus a draining gas locker. The seat at the aft end of the cockpit is easily removed when converting from cruising to racing mode. There's also access





1 The 35 is an updated version of the Salona 34 hull, with additional waterline length 2 Race features such as a Harken under-deck headsail furler sit alongside a deep cruising-style toerail 3 The first Salona 35 easily won IRC 3 in last year's Garmin Hamble Winter Series 4 Simple tweaks made on 'VitalEyes' for inshore racing included increasing the main halyard purchase and leading the vang to both sides of the companionway 5 There is a forward-facing nav station with dedicated seat 6 The Salona 35 tracks nicely upwind, although the performance bulb may be of particular benefit to short-handed sailors





to the quadrant from under the cockpit floor, with the potential for further stowage here if necessary when in cruising mode. On the foredeck there's a deep anchor locker, with a plinth for installation of a windlass.

'VitalEyes' was the first Salona 35 to race in the UK and was fresh out of the box going into last year's winter series. She was entered by Craig Cossar, who brought along many of his fellow crew from David Bartholomew's King 40 'Tokoloshe'.

Modifications for inshore racing were relatively modest, including jib sheet inhaulers on a 6:1 purchase to allow adjustment even with the sail fully powered up. The backstay purchase was also increased, a mainsheet fine tune added and the main halyard changed to a 2:1 purchase, so a thinner halyard could be used and the sail would be easier to hoist.

Other changes included leading the vang to cleats on each side of the companionway, replacing jib and spinnaker sheets with Vectran lines and adding a 10mm Vectran jib halyard. He opted for end-for-end gybes with the carbon pole, with ratchet blocks for the spinnaker sheets and a multi-purchase tweaker system that was also led aft to the cockpit.

A couple of additional small changes we would have liked to see include reducing mainsheet friction and re-angling of the mainsheet coarse cleat to make it easier to release with the traveller to leeward. Otherwise the deck gear worked extremely well,



foot supports. Our test took place in bright February sunlight, with a brisk and gusty easterly breeze ranging from 13 to 17 knots, with occasional gusts to 20 knots.

For our test the boat had been set up with fully battened Dacron mainsail and blade jib, rather than the North 3DLs that were used in the Winter Series, which wasn't ideal for the brisker end of the wind range.

Bearing away on a broad reach back towards the Hamble, with boat speed peaking at just over 8 knots, she tracked predictably easily with precise and responsive steering. Polars show maximum downwind VMG is achieved on a near dead run in winds of 14 knots or more, with a maximum boat speed when broad reaching in 25 knots of breeze of just over 10 knots.

After campaigning the boat in the winter series, Cossar told us: 'Given the wind range the boat performs in she's a really good all rounder. When racing we didn't point as high as the First 35s – not that we expected to – but with the sheets cracked a little we matched the J/97s for speed.

'She needs 10 knots of breeze to be competitive – if it's less than that the J-Boats get away. With race sails and a full crew on the rail you start looking to depower in about 17 knots true. It's also quick on a close reach if the wind's too far forward for the asymmetric boats to use their kites.'

When asked to identify the key reasons for his Winter Series successes he said: 'A really nice bunch of good sailors, and courses that suited us – they were mostly straight up and down, and unlike the A-sail boats we could run at 170 degrees TWA. Also many of the races were in the right wind range – although in the last one, when there was only five knots, we were eighth.'

The 35 is one of the dwindling number of new yachts fitted with a proper forward-facing chart table with a dedicated seat

'VitalEyes' is fitted with the highperformance aluminium rig, which is one metre taller than the standard spar. It's a double swept-back-spreader fractional, with a relatively flexible section and rod rigging.

Under sail



The twin carbon wheels, mounted well outboard on cantilevered pedestals certainly look the part, and there's a nicely direct feel though the steering. However, it's not possible to helm upwind sitting on the rail astride of the wheel – there's nothing to brace your feet against to stay in place with the boat heeled.

Standing at the helm it's just possible to get a good view of the luff of the jib, although we would recommend the optional cockpit floor Upwind she tracked well, with light weather helm, when the breeze was towards the lower end of the spectrum, although in the stronger puffs we needed to fully depower the main to avoid stalling the rudder. However, we had neither the benefit of a full crew on the rail, nor race sails to keep a flatter shape; either of these would have certainly enabled us to keep the power on for longer.

The standard performance keel, which offers better righting moment than the plain blade fitted to our test boat, would also offer more stability in exchange for a penalty under IRC, increased pitching in a head sea and a little more drag. These may be sacrifices worth making for those planning two-handed offshore campaigns, in order to benefit from the additional stability of the bulb keel.

Below decks



The Salona 35 has a conventional two-cabin layout with a bright feel and a number of well thought out features. The saloon seat backs, for instance, can be removed to create a wider



bunk, where there's easily-accessed space to stow bedding during the daytime. There's also stowage under the settees, in overhead lockers each side, plus two drawers and a locker at the nav station. The saloon has a removable table that sits on an inverted stainless steel U-bar. The Salona 35 is also one of the dwindling number of new yachts fitted with a proper forward-facing chart table with its own dedicated seat.

The well-appointed owner's cabin forward is of a very good size for a boat of this style and length, with a decent-size double 'V'-berth, plus ample standing/dressing space at its head. There's also a separate seat at a

lower level than the berth, and cabinets each side for clothes storage. The second double cabin, aft of the heads compartment, has a larger berth, although part of it is inevitably under the cockpit and there's both less stowage and less natural light here.

Verdict

There are clearly many ways in which the Salona 35 would make a lovely, fast, yet reasonably easily handled cruiser and it could make a perfect dual-purpose boat. She's also the kind of boat that IRC is generally perceived as favouring - her 2012 rating of

1.001 certainly bears this out. Despite this, there's a sense in which it would be difficult to get excited about the Salona 35 as a dedicated round the cans raceboat – she just isn't as much fun to sail as an all-out lightweight racer.

Having said that, for a capable crew the Salona 35 with the blade keel fitted to our test boat has the potential to deliver top-class results in a competitive fleet and the prospect of that is certainly very, very tempting. The deep bulbed keel would most likely be the best choice for a dual-purpose boat, or for short-handed racing, where the additional stability would be helpful and crew weight is not available to tweak fore and aft trim.

COMPARISONS



A distinctive design from Rob Humphreys with twin wheels, plus twin rudders and chines for excellent control and speed downwind in a blow.

> **LOA** 10.60m **Beam** 3.50m Displacement 5,350kg Ballast 1,390kg Mainsail 35.91sq m **Jib** 29.68sq m



More conservative, though justly popular, cruiser racer from Beneteau, with modern hull shape and a large single wheel.

> **LOA** 10.85m **Beam** 3.64m Displacement 5,500kg Mainsail 41sq m Headsail 31sq m Spinnaker 103sq m

ANSWER BACK

From: John Wittey, Wittey Marine

The test boat was ordered to a specification that a keen sailor would buy to either take his family on a cruising holiday, or at weekends fit the racing sails and have a very competitive racing boat. 'VitalEyes' was built for the 2012 Southampton Boat Show and aimed at the racing fraternity, with the intention to campaign the boat in the Winter Series. The specification was carefully put together by our team to ensure that as few 'tweaks' as possible were necessary.

Financed and campaigned by John Wittey under the new Salona UK venture Vital Yachting, John invited Craig Cossar (and friends) to skipper the boat. The racing team (a great bunch from Craig's fellow crew on David Bartholomew's King 40) were joined by various customers, Salona owners and other interested parties.

We were delighted to make the boat available to Craig for this, and other smaller events, which all were very successful for us. We also had Craig race the previous Salona 44, which won the frostbite series in full cruising mode - with a Salona performance is a standard feature.

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