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Boat Review

By Charles J. Doane

Dehler 38

A venerable German brand is reborn

One of the more notable victims of the Great Recession in Europe was the German firm Dehler, which for many years built highly respected cruiser-racers at one of the continent's larger production yards. Fortunately, the German-based conglomerate Hanse Group, which now encompasses five different brands, salvaged the insolvent company and has launched it into its fifth decade of existence. The new Dehler 38, introduced this past year both here and in Europe, is the first new Dehler model produced entirely by Hanse at its mass-production facility in Griefswald. Though Hanse now owns and runs the company, Karl Dehler, son of the founder, is still involved in the business and played an integral role in developing this new design.

CONSTRUCTION

The hull and deck are both handlaid fiberglass cored with end-grain balsa. The outer layer of the hull laminate is set in vinylester resin to resist blistering, while the interior is reinforced by an internal grid which is incorporated into the laminate. Supporting bulk-

heads bonded in place. Deck hardware is supported by aluminum backing plates set in the laminate. There are three different keels available in various depths and shapes, all with cast-iron ballast. Overall finish quality is good for a mass-production boat.

ON DECK

The deck layout is user-friendly, with an emphasis on performance. The double-ended mainsheet is led from a full-width

traveler that spans the cockpit just in front of the twin wheels to winches that are easily reached from either helm. The traveler controls and the cascade tackle for the adjustable fiber backstay can also be easily reached by the helmsperson, so that the driver, if necessary, can control all aspects of mainsail trim while steering. The jib sheets, which run through adjustable cars set on a deck track, can be controlled from the forward cockpit winches or from the aft winches by the helm stations. In addition to the four cockpit winches, there are two coachroof winches for handling lines led aft from the mast.

Cockpit ergonomics are good. The helmsperson can steer comfortably from both the windward and leeward sides of the boat, and crew can move easily fore and aft between the cockpit and deck, particularly on the windward side, as the coachroof side near the cockpit is perfectly pitched to provide secure footing when the boat is heeled. A fold-down transom allows for easy access to the water.

The boat I sailed was not equipped with the optional fixed cockpit table, so there was no place to mount an on-deck chartplotter and nothing to brace feet against in the middle of the very wide cockpit space. This may not bother a large crew running short races around the buoys, but if you plan on doing some cruising or distance racing, you'll probably want that table. Also, there's no place to easily stash line tails, so you'll need to watch that stray tails don't get caught in the recessed traveler track.

Another small quibble: the anchor well is small—it's OK for racing, but not so good for cruising.



ACCOMMODATIONS

Our test boat featured the three-cabin layout with twin staterooms under the cockpit and one stateroom forward. Given the size of the boat, the aft staterooms have good vertical clearance (including standing headroom by the door) with good light and reasonable ventilation. The port-side stateroom is accessed through the one head compartment on the boat, which isn't as awkward as you might expect.

The head itself is divided into a vanity section aft, with a sink and mirror, and a "business" section forward, with a segregated toilet/shower compartment, the door of which is cleverly configured so that it can close off either just the toilet and shower or the entire head from the saloon. This allows you to achieve privacy in any given area and allows access to the stateroom when the toilet or shower is in use. You

will, however, be cut off from or shut into the stateroom when others want privacy at the sink.

The saloon has a center-line fixed table with folding leaves and a dinette settee/berth to starboard. The straight settee to port incorporates a convertible nav desk that can be slid out of the way when you want to stretch out and sleep. The desk itself is a mite undersized, in the modern fashion, with electronics stashed inside a locker alongside.

The settees on both sides feature headrests that fit neatly over the curved cupboard lockers, giving the interior the look of a swank private jet. The galley, to starboard aft, is small, but perfectly

Our Take**PROS**

- Good cockpit layout for both singlehanders and full crews
- Fine performance under sail
- Versatile head layout makes good use of space

CONS

- Anchor well is small for cruising
- No good place to stow line tails in the cockpit

serviceable. Counter space is limited, but there is a dedicated work area right by the stove.

UNDER SAIL

I sailed the standard "cruising" version of the boat, with a 6ft 7in T-keel and an aluminum 9/10ths Seldén rig, in 12-14 knots of true wind in flat water on Chesapeake Bay. A "competition" version of the boat, with a deeper T-keel and a taller carbon rig, is also available, or you can order the standard boat with an L-shaped shoal-draft keel.

Performance was excellent—just as good as, if not better than, the "old" Dehlers I remember sailing years ago. Under main alone this boat sailed easily at about 5 knots at a 45-degree apparent wind angle, could pinch to about 40 degrees while still maintaining 4.2 knots of speed, and tacked easily. Once we rolled out the 105 percent jib, our best close-hauled angle improved to inside 30 degrees and our speed increased to just over 8 knots in an apparent wind of 16-18 knots.

Bearing away, our speed shot up to peaks of over 9 knots at a 50 degree AWA. At 90 degrees we were making high 8s, and even at 120 degrees were still in the mid-8s. As deep as 150 degrees—still with no downwind sails—we easily maintained an average of 7 knots.

Helm feel throughout was superb. The boat fell easily into a narrow groove, and though it needed some attention to keep it there, the deep well-formed rudder never lost its grip. Going upwind we never had to play the main to keep the boat on its feet; going downwind steering was smooth and positive.

UNDER POWER

Our boat was equipped with the standard 28hp Volvo diesel turning an optional two-blade folding propeller. A 40hp engine is available, but hardly seems necessary. We made 7.2 knots at 2,100 rpm and 8.8 with the throttle wide open at 2,900 rpm. The boat turned easily inside its own length. Backing down it took some time for the folding prop to bite the water, but the boat was easy to control once moving. *AL*

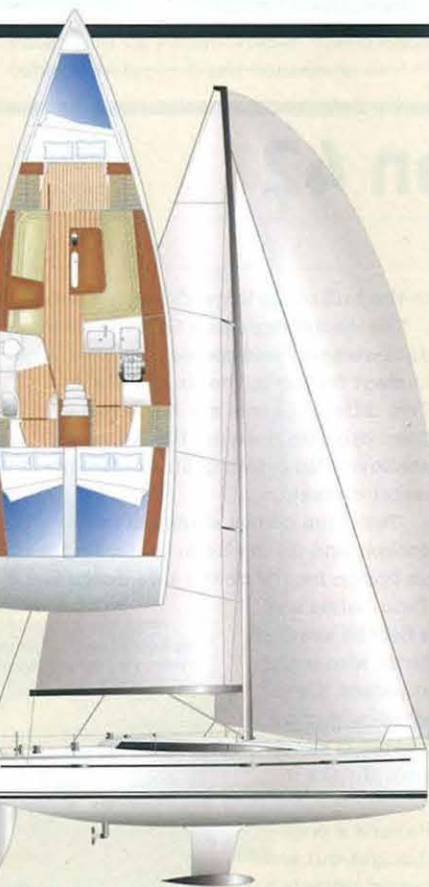
Specifications

HEADROOM: 6ft 4in
BERTHS: 5ft x 6ft 9in (aft); 6ft 3in x 6ft 11in (fwd)
LOA: 37ft 1in // LWL: 34ft 1in
BEAM: 12ft 4in
DRAFT: 6ft 7in (std); 7ft 3in (racing); 5ft 3in (shoal)
DISPLACEMENT: 15,652lb (std); 14,881lb (racing); 16,093lb (shoal)
BALLAST: 4,960lb (std); 4,188lb (racing); 5,621lb (shoal)
SAIL AREA: 853ft ² (std); 931ft ² (racing)
FUEL/WATER/WASTE (GAL): 42/79/16
ENGINE: 28hp Volvo (saildrive); 40hp optional
ELECTRICAL: 165AH x 2 (house); 90AH (engine)
DESIGNER: Judel/Vrolijk
BUILDER/AGENT: Hanse Group; Griefswald, Germany, hansegroupp.com
U.S. DISTRIBUTOR: Hanse USA; Rowley, Massachusetts, us.hanseyachts.com
PRICE: \$219,200 base
BALLAST RATIO: 27.7
SAIL AREA-DISPLACEMENT RATIO: 21.8
DISPLACEMENT-LENGTH RATIO: 176

Performance

RACER

CRUISER

**Conclusion**

This new Dehler is competitively priced and seems just as quick and fun to sail as the Dehlers of old. It's fast enough to be a worthy competitor on a racecourse, and the accommodations are comfortable enough for family cruising.