

# Focus on the job

**If you are aiming to deliver the ultimate high performance fast-cruising catamaran then it helps to dispense with other criteria that are typical of the breed but irrelevant for your particular purposes**

**C**atch Me, the prototype high-end and high-performance GP70 catamaran, is capable of cruising at speeds of up to 25kts, yet offers sumptuous accommodation both internally and on deck. Unlike many high-performance vessels of this size, the boat is optimised for fast cruising without regard for the needs of racing crews.

This approach made it possible to create a unique yacht that's safe, fast and very easy to handle. It's the vision of Gael Paclot, who first approached VPLP and a team of advisors with an initial concept, with key priorities including simplicity, robustness, reliability, silence on board

and the potential for very long periods of autonomy. At the same time the boat had to be light, with excellent performance over long distances with a small crew, while offering stylish, spacious and superbly appointed accommodation.

A relentless drive to minimise weight, including epoxy carbon sandwich for

80 per cent of the construction and even interior furniture has kept displacement down to only 19,000kg. To put that number in context it's significantly lower than many mass market catamarans 20ft shorter. Similarly, a concerted effort to rationalise systems that consume large amounts of energy, while maximising the use of renewable energy sources, has created a boat that can be self-sufficient for remarkably long periods. Both engines also have ultra-high output alternators, giving greater redundancy of systems.

The design is being marketed by renowned broker and veteran Vendée Globe race competitor Bernard Gallay. What attracted him to it? 'When a boat is well-built, well-designed and well-conceived, then you should find some simplicity on the boat,' he says. 'It shows that choices

have been made towards one direction and so everything is homogenous around the concept. This boat is also extremely well built, with a superb quality of finish inside and everything is well designed.'

The first boat was moulded by Technologie Marine near La Trinité sur Mer in Brittany and completed by Trimarine near Lisbon, where subsequent boats will be built. The firm was founded in 1989 by veterans of the *Il Moro di Venezia* America's Cup campaign and remains at the cutting edge of boatbuilding. 'They are very focussed on making the perfect boat, without the slightest flaw and with the best technical solutions,' says Paclot.

Throughout the GP70's style is understated, yet elegant, with a first-class level of finish and interior design meticulously crafted in a classic, sober and almost timeless style. Gallay also draws a comparison to the 82ft *Magic Cat*, created by Gilles Ollier, founder of the legendary Multiplast shipyard in 1996. 'She's still a modern and very good looking catamaran – one of the nicest actually,' he says. 'The GP70 also has something special in the simplicity of the design and the concept and is also a yacht that will not date.'

Below decks, the layout gives over all of the port hull to a huge owner's suite, while there are two guest cabins, plus a crew cabin in the starboard hull, providing lots of space for everyone. Despite the sleek

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## VPLP Design: Mathias Maurios

The original brief for *Catch Me*, the first GP70, was to design a blue-water cruising cat that was sufficiently sober to be both fast and comfortable. This philosophy led to a number of bold choices, made possible by state of the art construction. The result is an exterior style with taut hull lines and shapes, and a unique side hull edge, giving the boat a timeless, racy look.

To respect the spirit of the project we had to go straight to the essentials, both in architecture and outfitting. Hull interiors were painted and furniture was designed to be integrated into the structure as much as possible.

It was possible to maintain a high level of comfort while keeping things simple. Some clever architectural and technical solutions have been implemented, such as retractable engine controls and natural ventilation in the saloon. On deck, large storage lockers have been integrated into the forward cross-deck. A high-end electrical management system with wind turbines and solar panels avoids the use of onboard generators.

In a quest for performance through weight reduction, most of the boat was built in carbon where there was a significant gain to be made. Carbon deck, superstructures and bulkheads ensured a very stiff platform. The slender hulls validated by CFD, fitted with centreboards or low aspect-ratio keels and the powerful sailplan enable the GP70 to approach 25kts.

At the customer's request, the GP70 has tiller steering from bucket seats, a feature more commonly found on racers that ensures exciting steering.

Thanks to the customer and his technical advisor, we were able to design a coherent boat in line with his programme and the performance required. The build was particularly well executed by Trimarine in Lisbon with the final weight well under control.

Without being extreme, the GP70 is able to maintain high average speeds in comfort, while including all the conveniences of a modern boat without excess. The GP70 is the ideal boat for fast round-the-world sailing in total comfort and safety.

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The first boat was moulded in France, then finished and fitted out at Trimarine in Lisbon, where all subsequent boats will be built

styling, the very spacious bridgedeck area has a system to lower the glass in the forward windows, creating excellent natural ventilation when underway in light and moderate conditions, or at anchor.

The carbon foam sandwich furniture is painted to such a high standard it gives no hint of the nature of its construction, while there's enough wood veneer on the saloon table, galley work tops and so on to create a feeling of warmth, without losing the wonderfully bright feeling created by a huge amount of natural light.

The decision to optimise the GP70 solely as a fast cruiser avoids many of the compromises that are inevitable in a dual purpose boat. There's no need, for example, to prioritise a deck layout for a

race team of 10 people to make super-slick spinnaker hoists, gybes and drops on the racecourse. This in turn facilitates a simpler and more streamlined layout that is easily handled with only one or two people on watch.

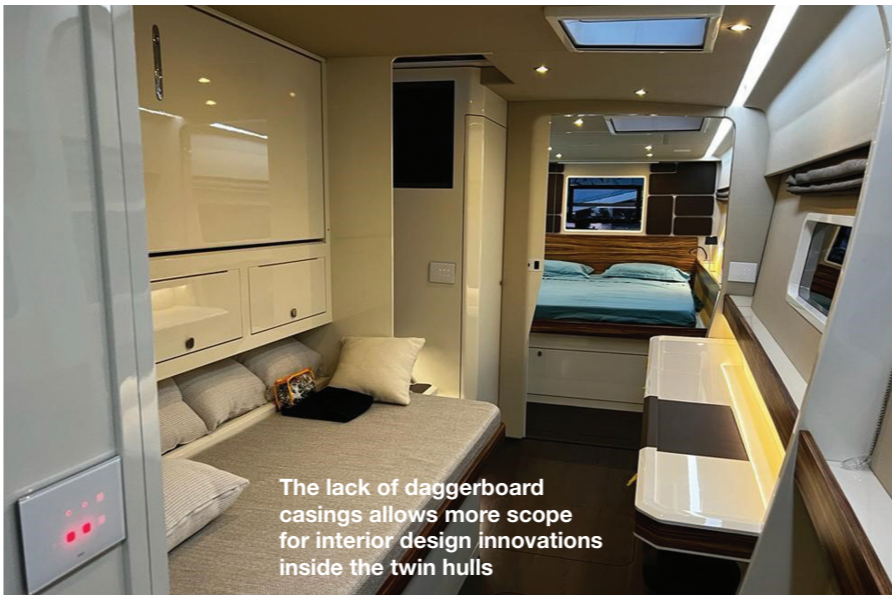
This is achieved through a number of elegant technical solutions, many of them borrowed or adapted from the world of high-performance solo offshore racing,

resulting in a very efficient deck layout.

The theme of simplicity even extends to the tiller steering. This is by no means unprecedented on multihulls of this size (it works well on MOD70s for example) and offers a number of advantages over wheel steering beyond simply the more direct and responsive feel of a tiller. For a start, the helm seats are very comfortable and are naturally angled slightly inwards towards the centre of the boat. 'This makes it a convivial aspect of the boat,' says Paclot, 'so you can easily communicate and chat with everyone else in the cockpit when you're steering.'

Halyard and reefing lines are handled by two electric winches at the mast step, which reduces friction to

the absolute minimum. This makes sail handling quick and easy – a critical factor when reefing – as well as reducing chafe in lines. The only downside is that you have to go forward to reef, but on a catamaran of this size you are a long way from the water and the deck is designed to give easy and safe access from the cockpit. 'I like the system because it's simple and efficient,'



The lack of daggerboard casings allows more scope for interior design innovations inside the twin hulls



The GP70 is a pure performance cruiser and no compromises have been made with a full racing crew in mind. Daggerboards are an option but hull #1 has been built with fixed keels

says Paclot. 'Being quick when you need to take a reef is important and this is the best way to do it.'

More complex deck layouts also take up more space, resulting in a boat that feels as though it has less room. A happy spin-off from the relentless pursuit of simplicity therefore is that *Catch Me* has more comfortable areas in which to relax on deck, including foredeck socialising and relaxation spaces.

*Catch Me's* sail plan is also smaller than that of a dual purpose boat of a similar size, making her easier to handle and reducing the risk of capsizing, yet the very light displacement means this is still a very fast boat. This aspect of very light displacement yachts is often poorly understood: loads vary in proportion to displacement, so a lightweight boat is automatically easier to handle than a heavier design, as well as being faster.

The team decided against an automatic sheet release system for *Catch Me* on the

basis it adds complexity and yet these are not infallible so have the potential to give a false sense of security. Granted, they have been some well-publicised instances of large catamarans capsizing, but these have all been pushed hard in race mode and not while cruising, when it's possible to throttle back to give more margin of safety without an undue loss of speed. Nevertheless, automatic sheet release systems will be available as an option on subsequent boats.

VPLP originally drew the GP70 with daggerboards, but in the pursuit of simplicity these were changed to keels for *Catch Me*, which brings a number of advantages, but surprisingly few drawbacks. While it's essential for racing yachts to be enormously efficient when sailing upwind, it's a different matter for long-distance cruisers, where reaching and downwind angles dominate.

*Catch Me* was therefore built with hydrodynamically efficient fixed keels.

These make manoeuvres considerably easier and save weight as there is no need for a powerful lifting mechanism. The lack of daggerboard cases also opens up more options for interior layouts and increases internal volume. This aspect is further enhanced by placing the generous water tanks within the keels. Nevertheless, daggerboards also remain an option for subsequent boats.

The GP70 benefits from a lot of storage space on deck, including four huge lockers forward of the saloon accessed from the deck. These have space for fenders and lines, plus all the toys that are an integral part of any extended cruise, from dive equipment (even including SeaBobs) to paddleboards, wing foiling kit and so on. This is a really important aspect for cruising, when up to 90 per cent of the time might be spent at anchor, yet is one that is still all too often compromised, even on very large yachts.

Why would an owner choose this yacht over other performance multihulls of a similar size? 'It's perfect for an experienced owner, or someone who understands the technology and concept, and wants to be able to comfortably cruise around the world,' says Gallay. 'The boat has all the criteria you need for that, without having too much complex equipment that can bring reliability problems.'

The courage to do something different in this part of the very competitive high-performance cruising market is a breath of fresh air and has produced an extremely desirable fast, spacious and safe cruising yacht. Rather than being the equivalent of a floating Ferrari, *Catch Me* is more akin to a high spec Porsche Cayenne: incredibly powerful but also luxurious, supremely spacious and safe. *Catch Me* will be on show at the Cannes Yachting Festival in early September. [www.trimarine.com](http://www.trimarine.com)

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