



ONE-DESIGN TIME

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The new MC38 from McConaghy's Zhuhai factory offers plenty to attract racing sailors keen to match wits in a speedy one-design, with an economical price tag



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► **IF YOU LOVE RACING HANDICAP SAILING IN AN IRC-OPTIMISED 40-FOOTER DOING SEVEN KNOTS IN WHATEVER DIRECTION YOU ARE SAILING, THIS BOAT IS DEFINITELY NOT FOR YOU.** The new MC 38 is the latest development in technology and design. It is very much influenced by the Med-Cup TP52 boats, but on a slightly smaller scale. When looking at it from a distance, the first words that came to mind were speed, racing, high-tech and fun! When Jon Morris, managing director of McConaghys Boats, invited us to Zhuhai for their premier test sail we were quick to accept.

The boat was designed by Dunning and Associates, a design team that has designed everything from Whitbread 60s and TP52s to America's Cup yachts. Australian-owned McConaghy's are the drivers behind this project, and there's plenty of passion on the part of the people for this project.

As we stepped onto the tender and motored out through the harbour, my first impression was that it truly is a racing boat and nothing else. The attention to detail makes it feel like a custom built boat rather than a production boat. The open transom and wide cockpit that continues forward almost to the mast makes this the biggest cockpit I have ever seen in a boat of this size. Our test boat had a two-wheel steering configuration, but it also comes with tiller to suit owner preferences. The deck is completely flushed, as with most modern TP52 designs. Removing the *doghouse* makes the boat lighter and the bow more accessible for the bowman. It also provides space for the jib-car track to go further in, which allows for tighter jib angles without

using an inboard sheeting system.

As is expected of such a boat, both the mast and the boom are made out of carbon fibre. To minimise the weight in the rig, both the main and jib are locked with halyard locks. This gives less compression on the mast, which ultimately can reduce the weight even further. To make it even lighter, all rigging is PBO (high strength fibre). The light rig is one of many key components to make for an overall lighter and faster boat. The lighter the rig, the lesser the weight that is required in the keel to keep the same righting moment.

Like most modern race boats, the MC38 comes with a square top mainsail. Due to this square-top main, there is a split backstay adjusted by one winch on each side, as well as a fine tune for the main trimmer. The fine



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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS – MC 38

LOA	11.35
LWL	10.55
Beam	3.5
Draft	2.8
Displ	3,000
Bulb	1600Kg
Price	USD 235,400 <i>Including hull, Rig, Deck Hardware, running rigging and inboard engine</i>
Electronics	USD 9,600
Sails:	USD 50,000 TBC 1 Main, 2 Jibs and 2 Asymmetrical spinnakers

tune gives the trimmer complete control of the power from where he is sitting without having to ask another sailor for help. It is not only the mainsheet position that is well thought through. The trimmers have great access to not only the jib/kite sheet, but also to the jib car in/out, up/down, and tack adjustment that are perfectly fitted out to be accessed from the trimmers position.

With a main and jib, we started sailing upwind along the coastline of Zhuhai. The conditions were perfect for a test sail, with 12 knots of breeze and gusts of 16 knots. The air was quite clear. The boat moved effortlessly through the water. It seems like the boat finds its own perfect heel angle and when it does, the helm is perfectly balanced and it only takes some minor fine-tuning on the main sheet to adjust to wind gusts. The wide stern and narrow bow makes it crucial

to keep the crew weight as far aft as possible. This is partly to hike further out and get the highest righting moment, but also because the stern carries most of the buoyancy.

After we had some very enjoyable upwind sailing, it was time to see what the MC38 could do with the big sail up. We bore away and the 180-square-metre asymmetrical gennaker was hoisted through a huge bow hatch, similar to the hatches you can see on Americas Cup yachts. When the kite filled the boat literally took off like a bat out of hell! The apparent wind quickly moved forward and as the boat started heel, the helmsman simply responded by slowly bearing away further. There was neither bow wave nor any stern wave, and the boat skimmed along the water. Our small chase boat had a hard time keeping up with us as we were just pushing the boat to see how fast we could go. The wide stern makes the boat stable and a wipe out is closed to impossible. As soon as the boat heeled over, the helmsman had plenty of time to bear away to avoid getting too loaded up.

The large gennaker gives great performance downwind. However, it is a handful to gybe it. As there is no “coffee grinder”, it will take a skilled and switched on helmsman to synchronise the turn, to pull off a good gybe. That, and a lot of pulling in the sheets! I suppose this is the trade-off when you want high-performance sailing combined with a small crew, which keeps the costs down

After three hours of sailing, we got a good feel for the boat – it was simply a pleasure to sail it. This is exactly what a modern one-design boat should look like – fast, fun and simple to use. But the simplicity also has a downside. The one-design rule is set for maximum 600

kilogrammes crew weight, which will be very demanding for the crew. All positions will be important in order to sail the boat to its full potential. The one-design rule is currently being developed with the aim to promote equal boats, high-tech racing and at the same time, keep costs down. To do so, the class restricts the owners in how many sails he can register as well as what type of electronics he may be able to use.

So how does the MC 38 compare to other 40-foot one-design classes? The classes that come to mind are the Soto 40 and the Farr 400. The Farr 400 has a very similar design to the MC 38, except that it has a grinding pedestal for the primary winches. Even though the name is 400, it is still only 38.7 feet. The Soto 40 is slightly bigger and slightly heavier, but with the same type of design.

The performance difference between the boats is yet to be seen, but one would think they are all great boats to sail. The Soto has the advantage of being the first class on the market. They have built up a healthy fleet in South America and have their premier season at the Med-cup together with the TP52s, this summer. The Farr 400 has the success of the Farr 40 class in the past, but will their clients be loyal and upgrade to the 400? What makes the MC 38 a better option over its competition? With the boats being of very similar design, the one thing that really stands out is the price. The Farr 400, in standard configuration without sails or electronics, is US\$395,000, and the Soto 40 with the same configuration, comes in at US\$340,000. The MC 38, however, comes with a price tag of US\$236,000. With a price far lower than its competitors the MC 38 definitely has an edge.

The MC 38 definitely has a great potential for the future. It is designed for sailors that are looking for a pure race-boat that do not want to sail around with furniture that'll never be used anyway. It is for the sailors that believe and appreciate the element of one-design, who are more amused by a high performance boat design rather than decrease performance for a competitive handicap.

Will the MC 38 be the new Farr 40 or Swan 45 class? Only time will tell. It certainly has everything going for it. I for one will not hesitate if someone asks me to crew for them on their new MC38! 🚢🚢🚢

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