

McConaghy's MC38 on the water - a cause for further excitement



'Form stability very evident as the MC38 gets into her most powerful position. - McConaghy MC38' John Curnow

Around 10 months ago, we had some serious cause for excitement when the MC38 from McConaghy went from drawings to moulds. At the time, we thought that the boat would do to one design keelboat racing what the Mach 2 had done to foiling Moths.

It has.

The very affable and likable Harry Dunning was in Australia recently, to watch the first MC38 from McConaghy go sailing and we had the opportunity to join the MC38 contingent out on the water, which was indeed yet further cause for excitement.

So then, what do you say about a 38-footer that does eight knots uphill and goes downhill like a skier in the giant slalom? Pretty much I just want one, I guess.



Abeam of the MC38 with a full kite. A lot of boats will see this image too, as she sails on by. - McConaghy MC38 - John Curnow

At a time when there are all these CGI and rendered models popping out of designer's computers, here's one that's real and that they can produce one every three to four weeks, which is a fantastic thing, considering there would seem to be quite a good many buyers ready to go.

This is one vessel that is well and truly capable of delivering the 'Smile on the dial' factor all day, every day. I was not the only one suitably impressed, either. Richie Allanson from North Sails was there too, keeping an eye on the truly amazing 3Di wardrobe. Walking around the vessel and then sailing her, you get the impression that nothing is over or under specified. It's all exactly the right gear for the job at hand.

Standing with the MC38's designer, Harry Dunning, and Joint MD of McConaghy's, Jono Morris, you do indeed get a sense of the impending excitement and fun, as the boat dances around in its pen. Here before you is the next level of One Design keelboat racing, all ready to go and play. That is a big job to undertake, for sure, but there's a genuine pedigree involved here, too. Jono was deeply involved with the Farr 40's here in Australia, after all it's what led him to take ownership of the iconic McConaghy brand with Mark Evans and Harry was at Farr Yacht Design in the days of the Mumm 36 and 30, Farr 40 and the Corel 45.

The original concept was in fact a 36-footer, but as Harry says, 'The move from 36 to 38 was done at a time when there were a lot of boats coming out in the 40-foot zone and we took the chance to move definitively in to that sector whilst we could. We bumped up all the parameters a little and here you

are.'



Purposeful and on a mission. Fuller bow helps to ensure she stays on her planing sections. - McConaghy MC38 - John Curnow

Optimism has also been an integral component of the team's *corp d'esprit*, as well. When the very first hull was irreparably damaged in a transport accident, before it have even been sailed, rather than being forlorn, they chose to do a quick overview of the whole vessel, which has resulted in a couple of minor, but important differences.

Chief among these would have to be that the retractable outboard with its unique mechanism has gone, in favour of a 15Hp Yanmar inboard Diesel and sail drive combination.

Apart from transforming in to a fantastic in-deck icebox now, this change has in fact probably given the MC38 additional manoeuvrability, made it easier to ensure uniformity around the globe and an even more compelling sales argument. Certainly a few potential buyers have been heard to comment that they would not have even taken a second look if it were to be solely available with its outboard.



For her size, she has a big rig and a very cool 3Di wardrobe from North Sails. - McConaghy MC38 - John Curnow

So whilst the team did not get to sail the very first hull, they did get to build it, understand that construction process and most importantly, see the vessel. Given that one of the objectives early on in the piece was to make it inexpensive and race at the top level, everything that could be done to achieve that, whilst locking in that core McConaghy build quality, really appears to have been checked off.

It is important to point out at this time, that the MC38 comes from McConaghy's 10,000m² facility in Zhuhai, China.

This is important because it allows for all those man hours to be invested in creating the famous McConaghy touches like stanchion posts, discreet logos, spreader shapes and that big boat feel they're keen to ensure is imbued into the vessel's carbon.

If it were not so, then you could expect the vessel to be more like double the price. As a result of that, it is fairly safe to suggest that you'll see plenty of MC38s flying about the place with their crews stacked on the back rail. Indeed, I would not be surprised to see around six at the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club on Pittwater in Northern Sydney, alone.

'Dirk Kramers and Steve Koopman, the chief engineers for Oracle and before that Alinghi, did the structures and Kirst Feddersen, who was Alinghi's rig designer before he too went to Oracle, is responsible for the rig, fittings and locks. It's really slick and all of this makes it a super special and very powerful

little boat. The MC38 has exceeded all the expectations and everyone is over the moon', said Harry.

Now the spars are as per original descriptions, except that there was a conscious decision to spend extra a little more money and go to a higher modulus carbon for the internally built mast. It is very special and light. 'We're locked in with this boat and really happy to have had the chance to maybe move up a generation with the demise of the first hull', commented Harry at one point.

As mentioned, the order book is strong with the first nine vessels already accounted for. The better than good on-water performance during the few days of demonstration sails, was more than enough to put a glint in Harry's eye as he talked about it, '...been a few potential buyers out with us and basically, they're saying it sails well and we'll have one.'

Indeed we do hope it does go that way and McConaghy's are set to go with a second set of tooling, which can allow them to double up on production in a relatively short space of time.

There are not a lot of options with the MC38, except for any sort of colour/graphics combination you may choose.

There are the twin helms over the standard tiller, such as Jamie Neill's Cone of Silence has and the electronics. First choice is the Tacktick wireless, but like the 3Di sails, you can opt for your own choice, if you prefer.

The fourth hull, which is going to the USA, will have Quantum sails, for instance. There are a couple of offshore items, based on a modular approach, should you choose to go down that path.

Primarily they are a snap in galley, also a head and some tanks. One owner is looking at doing the Cat1 Bermuda race and Jamie is talking about doing another Transpac, to go with the previous pair he did in a 30-footer!

At around \$300,000 sailing in OD guise, it is a fairly compelling argument, when you consider it is a proper 38 foot racer and a good deal larger than some smaller sporting boats that come at the same price.

The MC38's retractable/demountable keel and separating mast mean she will not cost an enormous amount to safely move about the place, either. You can even place the whole vessel on her side in an open-topped, 40-foot container.

So what about the sailing, then? Well under Diesel, the bottlenose dolphin-like bow digs in to resemble a dreadnought and the transom tends to hide behind her stern wave, no doubt aided by the black appearance of the carbon fibre.

When the impressive 3Di North Sails go up, you cannot help but be impressed by the shape and power they seem to hold. Acceleration is this vessel's most powerful card. On a start line you would not even go and mix it with anyone in a different or larger vessel, you'd just opt to stay on your own and shoot way from the line.

Equally, in One Design mode, you'd be constantly searching for the bands of breeze, for the MC38 goes to its pre-determined angle and then just takes off. 'In places like Pittwater, here, and boats like these, acceleration is the key! You notice it a lot on board', said Harry, 'It's a bit like lake sailing, a puff comes along and the boat doesn't tip over and fall down, she finds her mark and just goes.'

Certainly, judicious watching of wind and instruments shows that you can put on half a knot, just in the very split second that the breeze arrives.

The close sheeting angle affords a narrow slot and the MC38 will sail to 20 degrees apparent. During our test, mid-sevens were the norm, but just over eight had been seen earlier in the week, when the breeze was more stable.

Once you've turned the corner, the acceleration is even more fantastic and the numbers just that bit higher. We saw genuine 11's from the 14-knot puffs that kept wandering down from the nearby hills. The MC38 has also consistently made a commendable 18 to 20 knots offshore, running between Sydney Harbour and Broken Bay.

To extract the best, your crew will have to work hard, especially with where they are on the deck at various times, but the helmer will not have over-exude themselves, as the balance is quite remarkable.

Chatting with Harry on the rail he said, 'People have been talking to me all week about what a fantastic boat, the great job with it and well done, but the majority of the credit must go to Jono and Mark.'

Not only for the incredible amount of work they've done, but for putting up the money, for trusting me as a designer, trusting the boat, so as to go forward with this project. We've worked together for many years when I was at the Reichel Pugh office and we did a lot of projects together. Jono and I originally know each other from the Farr 40 days.'

So in addition to being gracious and humble, Harry was also very clear about the class rules that will be a crucial element of the MC38s success, just as they are with any One Design fleet.

'The Class Rule is currently being finalised. Accordingly, we've taken the opportunity to use an expert in the area - Richard Slater. He's the Rules advisor for Oracle and also on the AC72 cats. He does a great job: picks apart rules, makes them work well and makes them lean. He likes to see what can be done to make them a little bit different to that which has gone before.'

We've learned that people like to push in certain areas to get the most out of it and that often comes with large amounts of money. We're trying to stay away from all that and looking very closely there.'

That is great news, for if it is simple and yet cast iron, so that it can be all about a clear winner at the end of the day, then that will be a job well done, as that is entirely and precisely what One Design is all about.

So with the boxes ticked about the construction and nature of the boat, the results exceeding expectations and strict attention being paid to the way the

MC38s will interact with each other, you just hope even more owners get on board, quickly.

'Mark and I are very proud and delighted to see the MC38 perform so well and give a lot of people a big smile. We could not have done it without such a strong team in place, from Harry, Dirk, Steve and Kirst to all of the crew in China. We feel confident that it will prove the original hypothesis, that you do not have to spend huge amounts of money to race at the top level', said Jono by way of finishing.

Give in to your further cause for excitement and go to www.mcconaghyboats.com or call +61 2 9997 7722.



One of the McConaghy flourishes that the brand is synonymous with. - McConaghy MC38 - John Curnow



Returning Cone of Silence back to her pen at Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club on Pittwater. - McConaghy MC38 - John Curnow



Cockpit mainsail controls. - McConaghy MC38 - John Curnow



McConaghy's Jono Morris talks with the the designer, Harry Dunning. Ellen Pragnall-Raasch from McConaghy also on the rail. - McConaghy MC38 - John Curnow



All gear is exactly the correct specification and well-located. - McConaghy MC38 - John Curnow



Stylish stanchion posts are part of the form/function/artwork McConaghy package. - McConaghy MC38 - John Curnow

by John Curnow