

THE BULL 7000 REPORT

Test Report translated from Dutch magazine Waterkampioen, February 95

A trailerable touring yacht without any concessions to sportsmanlike sailing. That was Greg Young's goal at the design stage of his latest project. The end result was the Bull 7000, a remarkable yacht which meets Young's initial requirements. It takes a bit of getting used to. The Bull 7000 looks like a white Ferrari with an Alpenkreuzer camper in tow.

Bart Verschoor, a professional sailor and olympic boardsailor in 1988, started his installation business for racing yachts three years ago. His firm takes care of the rigging, fittings and deck layout. Recently he began to import the Bull 7000 in the Netherlands and Belgium. He introduced the yacht at the Amsterdam and Gent boat shows, where it drew a great deal of attention, not least because of the two horns at the bow - the reason for the boat's name.

How did Bart get in touch with this New Zealand bull? Bart: "At the end of 1993 I took part in the Omega match racing circuit with Roy Heiner. I stayed in New Zealand for a month after the races and it struck me that lots of boats were one of a kind and that there were quite a number of extreme designs among them. Typical and dominant at that time was the Elliot 7, a 7m boat more or less like the J22. Greg Young had just built the first Bull and I could use it in races, some of them against the Elliot 7. We sailed the Bull with a crew of three with our legs inboard, against an Elliot crew of four, two of whom were hanging on the side as ballast. The close hauled performances were comparable, but while reaching we came out well ahead. And so it was based on pure practical experience that I became convinced of the Bull's qualities - not only as a racing yacht but also as a touring yacht because the boat could be sailed comfortably with a crew of two".

Remarkable deep keel

The Bull 7000 has a striking appearance, with its two horns and its two separate cabin entrances but one essential feature of the design is found below the waterline. It is the retractable keel with a 1.70m draft, which is unusually deep for an overall boat length of 7m. The keel is long, narrow, with a definite profile and with a 375kg bulb weight at the bottom end: a truly modern design, such as used for the Whitbread 60s. The heavy keel construction is built up around an (inverted T-shaped) steel frame. Likewise, the keel case is heavily built up on laminated multiplex, with flange connection to hull and cabin roof, making it the centrepiece of a strong boat. In its lowest position, the keel is secured with two bolts. It is kept down, even while reaching or downwind, because, says Bart Verschoor: "stability is much more important than the reduced wetted surface gained by raising the keel to the 'up' position". The advantage of such a keel becomes obvious, when heeling over an increasing leverage keeps the boat upright and makes the Bull 7000 a fast touring yacht that can easily be handled by a crew of two, without any need for 'living' ballast in the gangway.

When aiming at top performance you need a crew of three, but not more, so it doesn't become crowded. The vertical bow and transom produce a maximum waterline. The hull shape runs from a sharp nose into a wide and almost flat bottom, which causes the Bull to go into planing while reaching, but more about this later on.

Gennakers on an easily adjusted bowsprit

The Bull, like many new designs, has a bowsprit to use gennakers to maximum effect. Greg Young, however, added an innovative dimension by using the horns which are fitted to the foredeck to

adjust the bowsprit at an angle of 60° max. to port and starboard. In this way the gennaker can be brought around to windward, almost resembling a spinnaker. 'Almost', because it remains an asymmetric sail. Flat off running with an asymmetric sail is not effective and therefore it is better to gybe downwind, gaining more In speed than you lose in distance.

Comparing a downwind course In strong and light winds:

Strong winds: good planing conditions, high speeds. The apparent wind angle may be less than 90°. The gennaker will be optimally effective.

Light winds: no planing, reduces speeds and the apparent wind angle may be more than 90°. The gennaker can now be made fully effective by swinging the bowsprit up to 60° to windward.

The Bull 7000's gennaker system may look a bit complicated. In practice it is easy to handle: The sprit is brought forward with one line and given the proper angle with one other line. The sequence is as follows:

- The gennaker is hoisted out of the sailbag, hanging In the cabin entrance.
- The tack line is pulled to bring the tack forward to the end of the sprit
- The gennaker sheet is adjusted.

Lowering the gennaker, in reverse order, is just as easy and the sprit is retracted to its position on the port fore-deck with the rack line.

Solid construction

In order to withstand the forces on the large rig and the keel, the Bull is built relatively heavy. Bow, foredeck and horns are reinforced with extra glassfibre. The keelcase is a central element in the construction. The hull is given its stiffness by laminating the moulded interior on to the outer shell. Hull, deck and interior are built into the mould by hand, using a sandwich construction of Divinycell foam. Ban Verschoor: "The boat weighs 1000kg but could be made 300kg lighter. Young, however, chose for extra solidity and interior comfort". Ban did not become the importer by chance. He worked for a month in Greg Young's yard "in order to get to know the building method and to become convinced that the boat is properly strengthened where it is needed most"

Further remarkable features

Apart from the more obvious novelties (keel, horns, bowsprit) there are more special points:

The double cabin entrance solves the problem of meeting the keelcase head-on when stepping down. Other advantages of the double entrance: you are able to enter the cabin when the gennaker sailbag is hung up in one of the entrances; you can enter without disturbing the cook or your crewmate when he is using the toilet

The mainsheet traveller track extends over the full width of the cockpit and is raised at both ends. This helps to maintain a fixed tension on the mainsheet while adjusting the traveller along the track. This is important because the Bull is trimmed on its mainsail: setting the sheet and doing the adjustments on the traveller.

The Bull's Interior is complete and simple, providing ample comfort for the toursailor: forward we find a U-shape bench around the table. When lowering the table the result is a spacious double bed. Furthermore there is a galley with stove, water supply, a chemical toilet, a 44l coolbox and last but not least a 1.95 x 1.25m double bed under the front end of the cockpit in addition, plenty of space for clothing, stores, sails, gas tank etc.

The Bull is easily trailerable

It is low on the trailer (deck is 1.50m above ground) and floats off after driving the trailer under water. Getting it out of the water is just as easy. The keelbulb should be guided into its slot in the trailerbed. With the 1000kg boatweight you need a middle class car to stay within regulations.

The outboard motor is mounted on a hinged bracket and can be pulled up and lowered down under the port cockpit seat in an easy one-arm motion. It's done within a minute and it gives favourable weight distribution in the boat

Deck layout is simple and effective. All lines converge into the cockpit via linestops. There is one winch on the cabin roof between the entrance hatches. This is enough to serve all lines.

We sailed the Bull out of the port of Muiderzand with a Force 7+ SW wind - hardly the conditions under which one is likely to go touring with a small crew of two. The mast is raised while the boat is on the trailer. Launching could not be easier: Drive the trailer under water and the boat will float off. That's all: no rollers, no crane, no winch. Lower the keel, secure it and the Bull is ready to go.

We went out with a helmsman, a mainsheet trimmer and a foresail trimmer, which suited us just fine. We put in a reef. There was only one reef and we think two would have been better in the strong wind. We still had too much mainsail which was difficult to open up. The result was too much heel and reduced speed. But not a trace of broaching. Otherwise tacking upwind went well, without 'living ballast' in the gangway. An adjustable strap in the railing provides a comfortable backrest. The foot-support brackets on the cockpit floor are excellent; so are the handling of the mainsheet and rudder effectiveness, even when the boat is heeling hard.

But wait till the Bull is sailed on a reach!

The small gennaker is raised very easily out of the cabin entrance, while standing in the cockpit: steering a bit to windward, gaining speed and down to leeward again. The Bull shakes its head and while you feel the nose coming up, in seconds the speed increases to ten, eleven, twelve, and at times up to fourteen knots. Sailing with the gennaker requires some training. The angle between windward and leeward is small, 10° at the most. Luffing rapidly causes a heel that can hardly be controlled in this gusty Force 7+. Steering to leeward too much causes loss of speed. Keeping the proper course, however, the boat is remarkably stable, listens very well to the helm and gives you dry sailing. Looking aft you see a great white spout of a wake. It must be said that this was an absolutely sensational experience. However, the helmsman is holding the extension slightly too much in line with the tiller to feel the rudder pressure. Therefore we feel the tiller could be a bit longer.

Maneuvering to stay within the buoyed channel towards the harbour, we made a sudden move to windward to avoid the shallows and broached. The heavy bulb stayed under and the mast top above water. While the boat raised itself and the gennaker sheet was hauled in, the Bull resumed its speed quickly and the problem was over.

Only for sportsmanlike tour sailors?

Key questions:

- Is the Bull 7000 a racing yacht? ... Yes
- Is the Bull 7000 a sporting yacht with excellent sailing qualities? ... Yes
- Is it a spectacular boat? ... Yes
- Is the Bull a touring yacht? ... Yes, but...

The Bull is recommended as a touring yacht. Yet it isn't a boat for the typical touring sailor.... meaning those who use their boat from A to B and consider 7 knots very fast sailing. The Bull is the boat for sportsmen who like to spend a comfortable vacation, but do not like to cross the IJsselmeer on a halfway rolled back genoa. Sailors who, even when on vacation, like to sail fast and spectacularly. The Bull is their boat: a fast boat which can be handled safely by a crew of two with proper accommodation.

A 1.70m draft is great for large and open waters but excludes small lakes. You will need the space to use the gennakers and make a nice sweep for a couple of hours. The price, although not kids' stuff, is in the range of other modern trailerable yachts (and sails, fittings and extras are of good quality). It is forecast that the Bull 7000 will form a racing class and rules have already been formulated.