Blast Reaching

GUNBOAT SAILING AT ANTIGUA RACE WEEK
BY DAVID SCHMIDT

I admit that I was skeptical about racing on a big catamaran for a day at Antigua Sailing Week. My previous cat experience was limited, and I wasn’t expecting much. I’d seen the fleet of ex-cell-looking Gunboats—three GL66s and three G66s—dockside on day one of this annual regatta. With their synthetic-fiber halyards strung from Marstron carbon-fiber rigging and their chisel-like bows practically begging to slice through the warm Caribbean waters, the Gunboats sure looked hot—but how easy could it be? I certainly didn’t expect to become a convert, let alone a believer. Then I stepped aboard the immaculately maintained Gunboat 48 Blast.

My monohull-centric worldview is in jeopardy the moment I see the galley sink. It has the usual sink parts—a drain and a faucet—but it’s the way the tropical sunlight glints off the sink’s elegant carbon-fiber surfaces that catches my eye. Closer examination reveals that while the interior is masterfully finished in African rosewood and mahogany, this is simply a veneer under which resides a composite structure of honeycomb core in epoxy. Swing a cabinet door and it feels light, airy, Space Age. The carbon-fiber hulls save weight and create a stiff, powerful platform. But it’s the forward working cockpit (a small pilothouse operations center), situated directly abob the mast with its banks of clutches and carefully positioned winches, that sells me on the fact that Blast is a bona fide raceboat. Step through the forward cockpit doors (also airy veneers over a honeycomb-epoxy core) and you exit a world of comfort and luxury and enter one of minimalist elegance. Halyards, reefing lines, and furling lines all lead back to this multi-person area, which commands a sweeping view...
FERAL CATS

A 50-foot high-performance catamaran with a super-fast hull and a speed of 34 knots, Feral was designed by Nigel Irens and built by Advance Marine Projects in 2006. It has a carbon fiber hull with a lightweight keel and rudder. The boat is equipped with a B&G autopilot and a Garmin GPS. It is powered by a 220 hp Volvo Penta engine and has a range of 1,500 nm with a fuel capacity of 800 liters. The boat is owned by Simon Fookes and is based in Antigua. It has won several races including the Caribbean 600 and the Trans Atlantic Race.