

The bigger picture

Austral Yachts is seeking an international market with this IRC racer/cruiser, its biggest boat yet, by Vanessa Dudley

RAY BORRETT of the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria has had a succession of yachts named *Laurelle* in honour of his daughters Lauren and Michelle. His previous boat was an Austral Clubman Super 30, forging a relationship with South Australian boat builder Michael Keough of Austral Yachts.

For his new yacht, Borrett was looking for a bigger boat to do bay racing in Melbourne, the East Coast passage races, Hamilton Island Race Week and family cruising in places like the Whitsundays. Keough, meanwhile, was planning to extend Austral Yachts' range to include a bigger racer/cruiser than the Clubman 36 it introduced early this decade.

He watched the growing of the Royal Ocean Racing Club's IRC rating system popularity and he says "I felt that 42 was a good size, just a little ahead of the pack. There are a lot of 38s, 39s and 40-footers and we thought the 42 would get the new breeze first."

Keough believed there was an opportunity to find an international market for a production line version of such a boat, and in 2004 he approached Farr Yacht Design with a commission to design it, as he believed the Farr name was the best-known and highest regarded in yachting.

After years of working with smaller design offices, Keough says, "It was different dealing with 16 people. Bruce Farr designed the hull himself, but a lot of other people were involved, too. They have one guy that just deals with rating."

"This was the first time Farr Yacht Design had done an IRC boat. Just after that four US clubs combined to go for IRC."

The designer's view

According to the design notes issued by FYD, "The adoption of the IRC rule at both club racing level and by some of the more legendary offshore events has sparked strong interest in boats that fare well under this single number rating system."

"While specific formulas used to determine the IRC ratings are not published, the style of boat favoured by these formulas can be deduced by examining the published rule policy, reviewing race results in great detail including those of our existing designs that have done well under IRC, and

applying to the rating office for trial certificates where variations in ratings given for different design choices can be compared with VPP results.

While IRC does have some clear policies outlined in their rule, there is considerable freedom for the designer to develop sweet hull shapes with favourable volume distributions, ideal appendage placements and good stability.

"Our team researched beam and beam waterline ratios, LOA and length waterline values and other basic hull parameters over a wide range of boat sizes to find the right combinations. Heeled volume distribution and transom immersion effects were examined to give the boat good performance and handling over a wide range of weather conditions.

"The keel is a T-style with a lead bulb supported by a cast iron fin to give the boat a low centre of gravity and minimised wetted area. This also allows the rig and interior to be positioned to suit the hull centre of buoyancy preferences and produces a relatively simple structural solution."

Two years later

It has been a long haul for Austral Yachts to produce a plug and moulds for the Farr 42. Big things have been happening for the company during that time. After three decades of building mainly trailable yachts, the company Michael Keough's parents Adrian and Sue established in the 1970s is on a major expansion and diversification drive. It is now involved in three areas: marine, mining, and urethane products, and obtained \$2.5 million in federal and state government grants associated with the closure of the Mitsubishi factory in SA, on the condition

that it matches that on a dollar for dollar basis to build a company employing 80 people. It is expanding the factory and office space to 4500 square metres, has employed a general manager and composite engineer and is purchasing the latest in milling machines and robot technology.

Michael Keough says he has had a huge amount of interest in the Farr 42 from right around the globe, with an order from Ireland for the second boat. Now that the first boat is actually sailing, he hopes the orders will roll in.

On deck

Laurelle has a sturdy-looking carbon fibre rig, included in the boat's standard specification, with a 20-degree swept-spreader setup. The mast was built by Applied Composites in Melbourne, and company principal Peter Kula was onboard on the day of our sail. He said that where the previous generation of in-line spreader rigs (supported by those often-problematic runners) allowed mast bend to be altered easily without changing the amount of load on the shrouds, with the new generation of swept-back spreader rigs the bend characteristics are built into the mast and there is much less that can be done with rig tension once it is in the boat.

Laurelle is set up with panelled carbon fibre sails from Frank Hammond's Horizon loft in Melbourne.

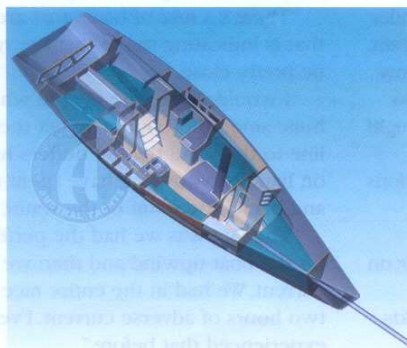
The deck layout does not have any big surprises, with Harken 53ST primary winches, 44ST halyard winches and 48STs for the double-ended mainsheet system. Spinlock XC5 clutches are provided for control lines on the coachroof. The boat has an hydraulic backstay controlled by a hand pump.

Tacktick wireless performance and nav instrumentation included three large read-outs on the mast and another couple of VDUs on the cockpit bulkhead.

There is an option of a bowsprit pole for downwind sailing. *Laurelle* runs symmetrical masthead and fractional

RIGHT: *Laurelle* on the Derwent River near the end of her first major ocean race (Ian Mainsbridge picture).

LEFT: Artist's rendition of the interior layout; bowsprit pole is an option.





chutes from a conventional carbon pole, certainly the best option for windward/leeward racing.

The twin composite steering wheels look great, are well-positioned for comfortable steering to windward or leeward, seated or standing and allow easy access to and from the transom, a much better option than a huge single wheel when it comes to cruising.

Roomy interior

The Farr 42 has a relatively vast amount of interior space for a racer/cruiser of this size, and gets it without having to pay the price of looking like a double decker bus. Headroom throughout is very good. On *Laurelle*, a cream coloured vinyl headliner has been used throughout, but on future boats an interior moulding will be used.

The two aft cabins both have a double bunk plus a pipe cot, and a hanging locker. Forward there is a double V-berth with a seat and a storage cupboard with hanging locker, plus direct access to the bathroom. This has a press-button electric flush toilet. A hot/cold water mixer tap with retractable hose serves both the vanity unit sink and shower.

The saloon has settees either side which were very comfortably padded and furnished. There are lee cloths to aid sleeping on these bunks offshore and also provision for pilot berths to be slotted in above the settees on both sides of the cabin.

The galley is on the starboard side at the aft end of the saloon and is generous in size, with nice use of clear-finished carbon fibre bench tops. A Plastimo Neptune 2500 gas oven and twin-burner stove is provided, along with a single sink with pressurised hot/cold water and a refrigerated icebox. There is a storage cabinet next to the stove and additional storage space in drawers under the sink.

In racing trim without the cabin doors or the saloon table, the boat is very open and airy. For cruising, the doors can be slotted in easily to provide more privacy and the drop-leaf table featuring more carbon fibre, can take pride of place just aft of the keel-stepped mast.

The nav station is very generously proportioned, with lots of legroom under the nav table, a padded seat (a padded backrest would be nice, too), and a big chart table with lots of storage space. *Laurelle* is set up with a Raymarine C80 chartplotter, Icom VHF and HF radios, a radio/CD player and an Itronix tablet computer with wireless mouse and keyboard set up to run C-Map digital charts.

There are sturdy stainless steel handholds on the cabin top, the galley,



ABOVE: Ready for a kite set during Skandia Geelong Week in January (Vanessa Dudley pictures).

BELOW: Well-proportioned hull lines; *Laurelle* uses symmetrical spinnakers.



nav station and the companionway, which lifts to provide good access to the 40hp engine.

Race results

Ray Borrett leapt in at the deep end with his new Farr 42 by entering the Rolex Sydney Hobart Race as her first long offshore race. Preparations were very

rushed but ultimately successful in getting *Laurelle* over both the start and finish line. The boat sailed with an 11-person crew, including Michael Keough, sailmaker Frank Hammond and experienced navigator Geoff Vercoe. It was Borrett's first Sydney Hobart and he feels this was a contributor to the boat's overall result, a disappointing 44th overall in the 59-boat IRC fleet. Racing

with an IRC TCC of 1.151, *Laurelle* was inshore when strong favourable current was assisting boats further offshore from the southern NSW coast.

After the Sydney Hobart, *Laurelle* raced in the Boags Sailing South Week at Hobart's Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania, where Borrett enlisted some local crewing talent including Mumm 30 owner Steve Harrison and 420 skipper Pat Hutton. "Our closest racing was with the Farr 40s with masthead chutes," Borrett says. "Downwind they were quicker; upwind in flat water we were quicker." *Laurelle* finished ninth of the 12 IRC boats, behind the Farr 40s overall.

Next was Skandia Geelong Week, in which *Laurelle* raced in the Audi series, finishing 15th overall on IRC in the 30-boat Audi Black fleet.

I was able to sail on *Laurelle* on the second day of the Audi series, when there were two races in a slowly building south-west sea breeze and choppy seaway. We finished tenth in both races, and I believe this was more to do with a poor start in the first race and some bruising encounters with the windshifts in race two, than the sign of a serious lack of pace.

Racing with a crew of 11, the cockpit got a little cramped during busy manoeuvres, but that's part of the trade-off for having the large interior. Positioning the mainsheet traveller aft of

Specifications

LOA:	12.75m
DWL:	1.34m
Beam:	3.94m
Draft:	2.55m
Ballast:	3310kg
Displacement:	7050kg
Rig dimensions:	
IM:	17.32m
J:	4.93m
P:	7.31m
E:	6.07m
ISP:	19.10m
SPL:	5.44m
Construction:	Hull, deck and interior grid construction of E-glass/foam sandwich.
Engine:	40hp diesel saildrive
Capacities:	Fuel: 200lt
	Fresh water: 200lt
Price:	\$565,000 plus sails and instruments
Designer:	Farr Yacht Design
Builder:	Austral Yachts, Adelaide, SA. Tel (08) 8384 5487; or visit www.australyachts.com.au .

the helm stations does open up the work space considerably.

To my eye this is a modern styled yacht which manages to look well proportioned while including a very big and nicely appointed interior. There are no real surprises in the layout above or



ABOVE: Keel is a T-section with lead bulb; deep rudder has plenty of bite.

below decks. It appears to sail well and although it has yet to set the world on fire on the race course, most boats require a sustained work-up.

Austral has a reputation for building sturdy craft. The one matter for concern is whether the long process of getting the Farr 42 from design to launch will hurt its chance to establish itself against later entries in an increasingly crowded section of the yacht racer/cruiser scene.

Setting up in Australia to build a world-class production yacht for the international market is no small proposition and there are few companies giving it a red-hot go; hopefully Austral Yachts will find success with the Farr 42.

