

The Nautitech 542's first sail



*Successful lines! The 542's silhouette hides an efficient hull, perfectly suited to fast cruising.
(Photo Olivier Blanchet)*

Builders don't generally unveil their new boats until after private tests, so when Nautitech invited us to take part in the inaugural sail of its flagship, we immediately seized the opportunity to join the reception crew for two days. Here then is the preview test of the 542!



Steering positions offset aft; the 542 really is a Nautitech...

THE LOMBARD EDITIONS

Marc Lombard is a naval architect whose reputation rivals that of Marc Van Peteghem, Vincent Lauriot-Prevost or Nigel Irens. It must be said that since the creation of the trimaran KER CADELAC and the F40 FESTIVAL DE LORIENT, the comrades have been playing in the same field and have deeply marked the development of modern multihulls. Marc cut his teeth on such improbable prototypes as TAHITI DOUCHE

before becoming a highly esteemed specialist in the appendages of some very fast platforms. From the catamaran LEJABY RASUREL to the ocean-going F40 foiler FILDODU, via the Orma 60-footers BANQUE POPULAIRE and SOPRA, his mastery and talent have expressed themselves on innovative, reliable and fast racing boats. The office is not averse to committing itself to projects for mastodons, such as FRIDAY STAR (the sister-ship of VENDREDI 13) or Fedor Konioukhov's 170' record monohull! On the other hand, the Seacart 30', built by Marström only weighs 700kg, but this pre-preg carbon bundle of nerves offers such potential that it could have been an alternative to the Extreme 40' on a top level international circuit. In the cruising multihull segment, the Privilèges carry his signature.

Nautitech: from La Rochelle to Rochefort, the development of a 'Made in Charente' builder." Since it was taken over by Bruno Voisard in 2002, Nautitech has based its development on the



with classic silhouettes and tasteful accommodation. The purchase of CIM (a leader in day-charter catamarans, from 60' to 110') allowed it to transfer to the superb factory in Rochefort, stop sub-contracting and bring the trades back in-house. Woodwork and construction are the first beneficiaries of this superb, 6,000m² tool.

ter phase is now carried out using infusion. The quality I was able to observe on the second 54', before it was decked, clearly demonstrates the mastery of the present team and the manager, Michel Atry; as much in the preparation of the cloths as in the implementation. The sensitive areas, loaded with unidirectional cloths, where the resin

installation. The power take-offs assembled by bolting onto substantial copper bars convey the seriousness of this process. Result: there is a storage capacity of just 900 A/h and the measurements carried out during these two days indicated that 750 or 800 would be sufficient! Our test version had numerous consumers, and a generator dedicated to the air-conditioning. Doubling the area of the solar panels and adding a hydro-generator would ensure (at lower cost and weight!) real and complete independence on a more sober model.

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AN ELEGANT AND EFFICIENT SILHOUETTE

restyling of the three jewels of the range: the 40', the 44' and the 47'. Relying on a strategy of prudent conquest, the builder is celebrating its 60th multihull since 2005, and exports a large part of its production. Boosted by the restyling, the platforms remain up to date, and the clientele appreciates these multihulls

A DECISIVE, LONG-MATURING PROJECT

The preliminary studies date from more than 3 years ago, but the performance of the new factory was essential to the launch of the 54'. Pulled along by this industrial locomotive, the poly-

esters, were perfectly impregnated and the composite of the hull panels presented a neat appearance, with an ideal cloth/resin ratio. Marc Lombard and the company's tradesmen have been meticulous with the weight specifications. In the research and development department, Nicolas Le Dorze's merchant navy experience guided him in the design of the pre-fitting of the technical elements (pumps, distributions, plumbing) on independent aluminium racks; weight centering and rationalisation of the installation are visibly optimised. The only snag: future extraction of the tanks will be problematic. The care taken with the realisation of the electrical fittings is reassuring. The clarity of the battery compartment, the meticulous handling of the connections, and the sizes of the cables reveal the conscientiousness of the professionals with regard to this strate-

When it comes under the camera lens, the 54' gives off an impression of power. The design is balanced, the coachroof is well-proportioned and the generously-glazed forward façade, with its vague resemblance to Vador, caps a wide uncluttered tunnel. Standing firmly on long taut hulls with a small 'step' above the waterline and a strake under the sheerline, the whole asserts firm lines. The absence of protruding hull sides combined with the generous height of the freeboard, optimises the evacuation of the water in the tunnel and its capacity to clear the waves; it will be possible to maintain a sustained point of sailing in the open sea. Close observation of the underwater lines unveils the design work. The sections are harmonious and flow well, to the eye; the increase in volume is progressive and never marked, especially in the middle of the hull, which is always prejudicial to the



An owner's boat which makes you want to go cruising...



A superb steering position, where visibility, pleasant steering and safety are brought together.

handling. The forward sections remain slim and the underwater lines are quite delicate; the flattened aft sections, intended to help planing, join harmoniously with the rest of the hull. This result may seem familiar, but it is not: the success of a shape retaining good hydrodynamic performance and having the versatility necessary to cope with variations in load remains a tricky exercise. The upper and

forcements. The rigid bimini is always risky from an aesthetic point of view; that of the 54' passes the test, thanks to the deep rear cut-outs, which make the structure quite fluid and airy, whilst improving the look.

CONTEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

The 16.3m hulls and the trick of the 'step' in the hull allow all the visual space and ergonomics

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lower ribs act as stiffeners and stabilise the long panels of the hull sides, avoiding internal rein-

expected by the clientele for this type of luxury catamaran to be housed, whilst preserving the

values of the specification. We find once again the stamp of the latest 44 Exclusive, but the volumes available and the decorative choices show more extensive possibilities and structure a functional and cosy marine atmosphere. The compartmentalisation is imaginative; the ergonomics and comfort of each cabin are those of a huge convivial unit (deck and bridgedeck) which puts the accent on the pri-

area is pleasant and practical. The galley's central 'island' will be lengthened on the next examples and the hob placed opposite the sliding door - a successful arrangement.

A RATIONAL DECK PLAN

The organisation of the control lines is remarkable readable, the classic design (reefs at the mast foot) favours this immediate understanding. The mainsheet traveller is an integral part of the



Inside, we find the stamp of the latest 44 Exclusive, but the volumes available and the choice of decoration give more extensive possibilities...

vacuity of the living units (in the hulls). The various versions can meet the needs of demanding programmes, from charter to family ocean cruising. The communication between the exterior saloon and the coachroof

bimini (stiffened by a steel beam), and control of the sheet is carried out on the aft cross-beam. Our test 542 was equipped with a powerful multifunctional electric winch next to the starboard console; the port aft winch (traveller, mainsheet) would also benefit from being power-assisted. Lateral access to the coachroof has been provided, but a handrail is lacking; the wide side decks integrate the hatches in recesses, improving safety and user comfort. The forward area (trampolines, anchoring beam, sunbathing areas in the bridgedeck extension) is a success. The classically constructed Maréchal aluminium tube has the usual splendid lacquered finish of this well-known series (welded fitting plates).

A BIG, AGILE CATAMARAN

On leaving Rochefort with the architect and the validation crew, we were pleasantly surprised by the engine torque



From the saloon to the cockpit, via the cabins, the accommodation structures a functional and cosy marine atmosphere.



The aft cabin of the 4-cabin version tested gives a good idea of the boat's style – both modern and consensual. The choice of materials, and the work on the lighting and the volumes allow the 54' to offer a welcoming and marine atmosphere which preserves the privacy of each living unit.



A very pretty double/single aft cabin (a special request by the owner).



The central forward cabins with their athwartships island beds also seem attractive!

and power. At an economical 1900 rpm, the speed was over 8 knots, at 2400, we reached 10 knots and almost 11 at 3000. The increases in rpm are clear and linear, sign of a good balance of the engine/folding three bladed propeller/hull package. The first metres of the main halyard were easily hoisted by hand; just one person can take care of the hoisting (whilst steering) thanks to

the panoramic visibility and the clever positioning of the master electric winch. Unrolling the self-tacking jib was a mere formality; a glance through the large frontal panels allows the position of the traveller and the leech tension to be adjusted. As we left the Charente, the platform's ease immediately became noticeable. It felt like a fast, agile limousine, and the speed on the GPS varied between 8.5 and 9.5 knots, at 50° to an apparent wind of 12 knots. If necessary, the 542 will point at 35 to 40°; the speed drops to 7 knots, but the keels do not stall. Let's say it straight away, the steering positions were amongst the most pleasant ever met! The directional effect of the rudders, the coherence of the linkages (cables and rigid rods) and the feel of the wheel rim (leather on a Goiot carbon wheel) combined, for the helmsman's satisfaction. I would not use fewer superlatives for the ergonomics: the control of the vessel, the visibility, as well as the feeling of safety and protection at the two steering positions deserves a special mention. During these two days, I helmed a lot, a sign of obvious pleasure, and appreciated the regular speed on all points of sailing, which at sea will result in high daily averages. We enjoyed steady breezes of from 10 to 15 knots and noted that the Nautitech sails well in light weather and accelerates in moderate conditions. The cut of the Incidences sails accompanied this result (mainsail in Dacron, however!) and participated in the

54's dynamic qualities. With a superb asymmetric on a furler, we sailed long legs at 12.6 knots on a reach, with 15.5 knots of true wind. The overall attitude and directional stability are a sign of healthy and pleasant behaviour in rough seas. Returning to harbour is not to be feared; the machine, equipped with precise and intuitive electric gearbox controls, manoeuvres efficiently and pivots with an agility its size would not suggest; there is no need to use the rev counter, as it has the necessary reserve of power!

CONCLUSION

The Nautitech 54' is elegant, very pleasant to live aboard and sail; it displays high performance in its category (despite a plethora of optional equipment on this example) and offers direct pleasure to the helmsman. This catamaran will probably prove to be an excellent ocean cruising boat for rich families; the others will have to save up and break open their piggy bank to charter it in the far-off tropical destinations that will be its playground.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION	
Architect:	Marc Lombard
Interior designer:	Franck Darnet
Builder:	Nautitech
Length:	16.30m
Beam:	8.55m
Air draft:	23.72m
Mast height:	21.80m
Bridgedeck height:	0.95m
Unladen weight:	15.5t
Laden displacement:	22t
Material:	foam/glass/polyester sandwich; infusion process
Windward sail area:	144m ²
Mainsail:	98m ² (roach)
Self-tacking jib:	46m ²
Gennaker:	115m ²
Spinnaker:	180m ²
Water:	2 x 400 L
Fuel:	2 x 400 L
Engines:	2 x 75hp turbo Yanmars / sail-drive / folding three-bladed propellers
Structural homologation:	Veritas
Price:	754,800 euros exc. VAT for the 4-cabin version / 794,600 euros exc. VAT for the owner's version
Exclusive finishing:	56,900 euros exc. VAT
Blue water cruising pack:	117,970 euros exc. VAT

THE PLUSES

- An obvious success
- Collective comfort and privacy in the remarkable cabins
- Performance and pleasure at the helm

THE MINUSES

- A few elements of the fittings to be upgraded (mainsheet jammer, return blocks, sheathing)
- Frontal access to the top of the coachroof
- Reefing pendants on manual winches

THE COMPETITORS

MODÈL	SWISS 55	DIAMANTE 555	SANYA 57
Builder:	Swiss Catatamaran	Diamante	F. Pajot
Windward sail area in m ² :	165	155	175
Weight in t:	14	12	19
Price exc. VAT in K euros:	1 100	950	?