

Nuclear Fusion

By Andrew Crawford

A recent entry into the production or semi production world of larger cats is the Fusion 40. These innovative vessels are based on a Gary Lidgard design and are being produced in Airlie Beach by Fusion Catamarans Pty Ltd and marketed by E Multihulls Pty Ltd. The name "Fusion" comes from the build method, but the way they perform I suspect it could have something to do with their highly impressive pace.

I won't go into any tech detail here as I understand that an in depth analysis will be accompanying this article.

I have only had the opportunity to see one Fusion in the flesh, so to speak. That boat is "Shellac" owned by Bruce Allen and residing in Wollongong, NSW. My initial impression was that the boat was kept light by Bruce. He however did say that it did have all the necessary accoutrements for reasonable, though not luxury cruising.

It is an attractive boat, as are all Lidgards that I have seen. But more importantly it is an impressively fast boat round a race course. At the Mega Multi Regatta in Botany Bay I was able to observe it from relatively close quarters around a race circuit and

I was most impressed with its performance.

At one stage it was skimming a hull – though not lifting it totally out of the water when on a reach. Certainly it had a powerful, but not overly ambitious sail plan. Deck layout included a helm on each side



not mandatory on a cat but a very useful idea for a boat which will be raced, it allows for the helmsperson to get up to the windward side and get a better view of sail shape etc. The design also includes a "brow" over the cockpit which I believe to be mandatory for a cruising boat to allow sun protection.

But on to the performance aspect of this design. I observed "Shellac" in a number of races against a diverse range of boats. Some were older designs and sizes ranged from 25 foot up and included that classic race boat "XL2" now called "Action Potential XL2" in light of skipper Paul Nudd's new chiropractic business in Sydney. The race conditions ranged from light breeze to reasonably strong conditions. In all races "Shellac" performed very well. In fact in terms of elapsed times she was second only to XL2 on three occasions and beat XL2 home once to finish first in that heat. Her starting performance was where I saw most of her potential and "Shellac" was able to sail higher and faster than most. Certainly the crew was sailing her well and pushing strongly but that's what racing is about.

"Shellac's" handicap was such that she finished out of the money in the final results but everyone at the Regatta was impressed by her performance and indeed Bruce won the Sand Bagging Trophy for his skill in hiding her speed potential.

I had but a short exposure to this design but came away yet more impressed with the quality of the



P E R F O R M A N C E

Multihull boat builders in this country. The Fusion is an interesting alternative to some of the others on the market and one well worth a look if you are in the market for a new boat. I look forward to actually getting aboard one of these boats and seeing how it feels and works but already I know they can perform.

