



A remarkable creation

When Ukrainian Olympic medallist Rodion Luka went looking for an eye-catching new design to help him promote sailing in his home country he found a kindred spirit in Russell Coutts's co-designer on the RC44 project, Andrej Justin

The L-30

It is a very rare privilege to have the opportunity to work on a project with as streamlined and 'no compromise' a philosophy as was the case when Russell Coutts and I worked on the original RC44 design. The majority of our studio's day-to-day work, designing racers and cruiser-racers takes place in an arena where design features are constantly traded off with each other as the designer chases the best compromise to fit within externally specified parameters.

So when we started talking to Rodion Luka about his latest requirements – and ideas – for a new boat, I first tried to figure out where this great sailing champion was getting his inspiration... or did he just operate in a parallel reality?

Rodion's requests could not have been more contradictory. So you really do mean a boat that is trailable, light and narrow, 1.80m draft, lifting keel, standing headroom, large 'bathroom', cosy accommodation, fast, generous cockpit, a family boat that is also suitable for one-design racing and ideal for corporate sailing... In short, we were talking about a minivan that must perform like a GT car and fit in a motorbike shed. OK, why not?

Hull: we worked a lot on the balance between form stability and wetted surface area, trying to preserve a fine bow entry but with well-balanced volume distribution when heeled. Due to the moderate beam this boat is not a reaching beast, but she is fast, responsive and forgiving on a windward-leeward course even in big breeze.

The combination of a small profile bulb and high-aspect ratio keel fin aid all-round performance, while twin rudders reduce drag and enhance control. The chined hull selected delivers good dynamic

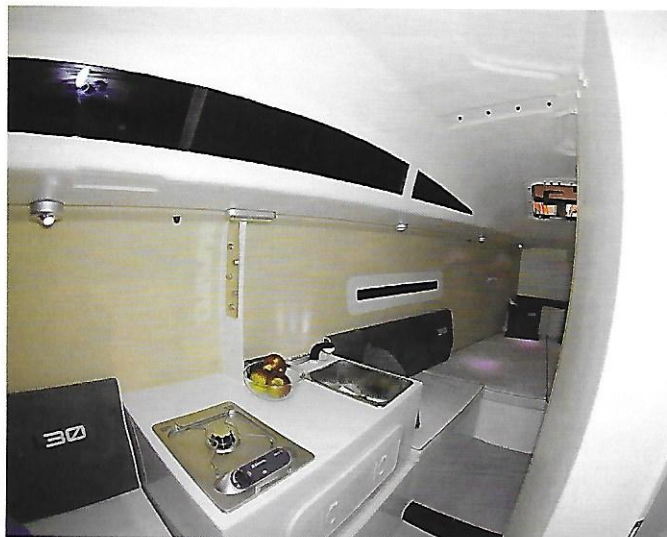
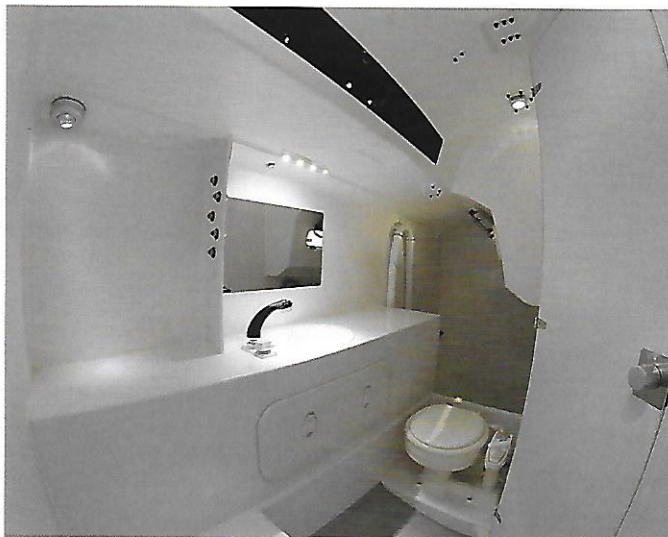
lift increasing with speed, keeping spray low and the wake flat.

Construction: to meet quality demands and future one-design requirements, vacuum bag infused vinylester resin, unidirectional and biaxial glass fabrics and various densities of PVC core are used for all of the composite elements. To minimise weight we designed a light structural interior built around the keel box, using the same light and cost-effective materials as in the hull and deck. Once it is all structurally bonded, the hull, interior structure and deck combine to create a rigid and easy-to-maintain composite structure.

Internals: for corporate use with mixed crews, a standing headroom bathroom with fixed shower, washbasin and marine head is a must in Rodion's view, so we (somehow) slipped one in to starboard of the keel box. Thanks to a reverse sheer and chined hull, our little boat actually offers a lot of volume despite limited beam – in fact, the result really is impressive for a boat of this length. A forward V-berth/dinette, a mini-galley amidships to port and two symmetric aft berths round out the accommodation.

Deck: a minimalist streamlined coachroof, big racing cockpit with twin wheels (honestly) and an ergonomic layout using match racing-sized hardware make for a purposeful and thought-provoking appearance. These days a TP52 has tiller steering while a 30ft cruiser typically features a wheel... so does this choice take us too far away from the racing world? Take a first look at the boat and the initial answer would seem to be 'yes', but then ask the helmsman about the feel he gets from the rudders and the answer is a resounding 'no'. The direct transmission ratio of the helm system, plus the unbalanced (lifting not pivoting) high-aspect rudder foils produce just the right amount of steering torque to deliver all the information on boat balance that you require, even in light airs.

Rig: the deck-stepped carbon rig with hinged mast foot and rod standing rigging can easily be stepped without a crane. The 25° backswept spreaders allow you to sail without runners or backstay



We can't speak for all of our wide-ranging and extremely well informed readership, but we have certainly not seen one quite like this before. What appears (*opposite*) to be a rather lovely, wheel-steered little 'yacht' transpires to also have a particularly cool and ultra-modern interior (*above*)... but then turns (*left*) into a screaming dervish when unleashed off the wind in a big breeze. That Andrej Justin is a clever fellow – as we knew from the RC44

So what 'our' programme provides is a fleet of company-owned identical racing boats with the offer of a season of well-organised, good-quality racing and at a reasonable price. The entry fee for the programme includes a well-maintained racing boat and a professional tactician, ideal for an amateur team of four or five people who still want to compete successfully whenever they can get afloat.

To ensure that every team has a chance of winning, after each of our races the tactician who finished first goes with the team who finished last, for the next race, second to second last and so on. The changes are done quickly using our umpires' RIBs.

Just as in match racing we use a team of umpires on the water who rule promptly on every incident; we have found our novices learn much faster this way. A nice motivation for tacticians is that they earn bonuses which are then paid by the winning teams.

We try to do five races a day and the 'club' then runs a ranking ladder for tacticians which means that they also compete for private coaching work between the regattas.

The teams in turn are more motivated to spend more time on the water as success depends not on buying a boat, selecting sails or a more expensive tactician, but mainly on their skill as yachtsmen and women.

The Platu 25 was a good boat for us to start with for round-the-cans racing, but not everyone wishes to race actively all the time, which was why in considering a boat to replace the Platu we commissioned something a little larger with a racing hull and rig but with a small cabin and head. And so the new L-30 is perfect for racing, cruising and having a good time with family, friends and business associates.

Our business model is simple: racing and training take up no more than 25 per cent of our available sailing time, another 30 per cent is allocated for cruising and the remaining 45 per cent we use for corporate events.

Our Ukraine club now has a pool of some 1,600 executives from more than 30 companies, and we have 50-70 new students come through our sailing school each year with more than half of them getting the racing bug. They then bring their children to our newly created Youth Squad, which we started last year with the purchase of 12 new club Optimists plus two additional coaching RIBs.

We are now actively promoting the sport here to new sailors in a way that has never been done before, so the idea of the L-30 was not only for a new yacht for private owners but also for a new type of 'yacht club' created to expand the sport into new markets.

Beyond Ukraine we have already received serious expressions of interest to establish our model with potential new 'clubs' in the Middle East, Japan and the USA.

Rodion Luka, Ukraine



in full 'minivan' set-up. However, when racing the runners allow better sail trim and additional rig security in extreme conditions (the L-30 was clocked by GPS at 24.7kt boatspeed in 35kt TWS – and with surprisingly dry decks). But the rig and sail area are definitely not oversized for the length of boat, Luka's requirement being that there should be no need to reef until at least 14kt TWS shorthanded and 18kt fully crewed.

However, despite the good VPP numbers, we were still a bit concerned about light-air performance and we were initially considering a taller mast option as a back-up plan. But on the second trial day, with 4-6kt of TWS, we were quickly reassured that there was no need for more power on the easily driven hull.

Plans: the father of this project Rodion Luka has a great vision for promoting sailing in his country that I will leave him to talk about below. The creation of the L-30 was driven by the need for a dedicated tool that will allow him to deliver on his ambitions. However, out of that seed of inspiration we believe that we have come up with an unusual little yacht, the L-30, a proper yacht with performance, interior features, ease of use and low operating costs that are worthy of serious consideration by those looking for a fast coastal racer that you can still comfortably spend a night or two on.

Oh yes, one more thing, our little planing offshore cruiser-racer is yours for €69,250 ex-sails and tax.

Andrej Justin, Croatia

Happy owner – happy designer

Not many people in Ukraine can afford racing boats so we had to find an alternative sporting model if we were ever to develop the sport here. Our sailing season is only six months long from May till November, but to have a boat with a sensible return on your investment you need at least 40 days on the water. However, with our very changeable weather most people here don't actually manage more than 20 days' sailing in a season and so the economics of owning a yacht are immediately compromised.