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The Hood Expedition 55 delights in a freshening breeze

BY CHRIS CASWELL

THEY'RE BACK!

UNLOVED FOR YEARS, THE MOTORSAILER IS THE NEW BELLE OF THE BALL

IF YOU WANT TO START A BROUHAHA IN YOUR YACHT CLUB BAR, YOU DON'T need to shout, "Long live *Alinghi*!" or even "Down with handicap racing!" All you need do is ask, "What is a motorsailer?"

In no time, you'll hear a remarkable array of opinions:

"It's any sailboat with a pilothouse."

"It's a sailboat that can power faster than hull speed."

"It's a sailboat with a big engine that has enough sail to claw off a lee shore."

The engineering types will have a field day, throwing out formulas involving sail area, displacement, waterline length, horsepower and even their grandmother's age. Others may simply paraphrase the classic snippet about obscenity: "I know a motorsailer when I see one." Even Francis Kinney, who revised the classic book on naval architecture, Skene's *Elements of Yacht Design*, dances lightly around a firm definition, offering a rambling anecdote about boats powering into the wind.

Over the years motorsailers have often been defined in terms of percentages. A 30/70, for example, refers to boat with 30 percent sailing ability and 70 percent powering ability. A 30/70 might be more precisely described as something like a displacement powerboat with steadying sails best suited for reaching or running. A 70/30, on the other hand, would be a "full-powered auxiliary yacht." It's not suitable for racing in a club regatta, but can still sail to weather effectively and has an ample rig.

The truth is that anything, from recipes to architecture, attempting to blend several different features can be good news or bad. Ideally, a good motorsailer should be able to both sail and power well. Of course, a worst-case example will do neither.

In general, a motorsailer has more dis-

PHOTO BY DAN NERNEY

placement, a larger engine (or engines) and less sail area than a sailboat of similar length. More displacement generally translates into more interior space and an easy motion in a seaway offshore. Of course, more displacement also requires greater fuel capacity, and especially with energy costs these days, greater expense.

Motorsailers have been around as long as there have been motors. The famous naval architect William Hand Jr. drew some motorsailers in the 1920s. Most of the rigs on those boats seemed like glorified steadying rigs on motorboats. Nevertheless, they did provide some off-wind assistance.

In the 1930s, Sparkman & Stephens also designed a series of graceful motorsailers that were built by Burger Yachts of Wisconsin. But the heyday of the motorsailer came in the 1950s and '60s, when the popular Cruising Club of America (CCA) handicap rule made a motorsailer—at least a well-designed one—competitive in offshore racing. Another reason for their popularity was insurance. Powerboats paid higher premiums because they had only one source of motive power. If that failed, things could get expensive fast. A motorsailer, of course, could also use its sails in an emergency.

Naval architect Philip Rhodes might well be called the godfather of modern motorsailers. During the glory years of the CCA handicap rule he designed a series of offshore cruising ketches, often with twin engines, which were fast, powerful and lovely. His *Barlovento II*, for example, a 71-footer with an 18ft beam and less than 6ft of draft, actually won the Block Island Race and took fourth in the 1960 Bermuda Race while providing her crew with all the luxuries of a motor yacht.

More recently, two things have contributed to what appears to be a resurgence in the popularity of motorsailers. The first is the increased cost, and declining availability, of fossil fuels. Being able to sail on free wind rather than constantly slurping diesel fuel has suddenly become attractive to many who never would have considered getting a boat with a mast.

Second is a renewed interest in adventure sailing to areas far away from the world of plug-and-play marinas. In response, designers and builders have created what they call "expedition yachts." Even if you never actually poke around the ice floes of Antarctica or explore the Amazon, having a boat capable of doing so does open up all kinds of new sailing frontiers.

Of course, there are a variety of designs out there, but no matter what your precise definition, there's no question that they are motorsailers. Let's take a look at some examples of this new breed.

HOOD EXPEDITION 55

Ted Hood, widely known as an America's Cup skipper, a sailmaker and a talented designer, recently debuted his Expedition 55. "Five years ago," he says, "I decided that a motorsailer could be made to sail as fast as, or faster than, the average sailboat and motor faster than the average trawler... when it's been designed do so."

With this in mind, the Expedition 55 has a long waterline, high prismatic hull shape and little overhang. Add a 300hp John Deere diesel to the mix, and the result is a boat that can either power or sail at 11 knots. Better still, the boat can motorsail at 10 knots while getting 5 miles out of a gallon of fuel.

Available as either a masthead sloop or staysail ketch (which should make it very nimble on a reach), Hood's Expedition 55 has a central cockpit protected by a hard doghouse that is surrounded by flush decks. There is room to stow a tender on the foredeck, and the tall transom contains an inset swim platform.

The layout below is flexible, but hull #1 has an owner's suite aft and an equally spacious VIP stateroom forward. The two are separated by a comfortable saloon that is open to the seaworthy galley.

A Scheel keel and centerboard keep the draft at 6ft, while twin rudders and a bow thruster make it extremely maneuverable.

NORDHAVN 56MS

To paraphrase the soundtrack to "All That Jazz," the Nordhavn 56 motorsailer proves that "everything old is new again." To most sailors, Nordhavn is about rugged seagoing trawlers. However, the company began in the 1970s building lovely sailing boats designed by Al Mason.

The company's first turning point coincided with Robert Beebe's *Voyaging Under Power*, published in 1975. Beebe preached

Nordhavn 56ms

the concept of long-range passagemaking aboard full-displacement powerboats equipped with masts and small cruising sails. Voila! The Nordhavn trawler was born. Today, the company has come full circle and is offering a motorsailer that would make Beebe proud.

This design isn't just a trawler-with-a-stick, but rather a carefully crafted full-displacement craft that is equally at home under sail or power. It has a range under power alone of some 3,000 miles, and given a good breeze on the beam it can power along at over 8.5 knots. And yes, folks, it will also go upwind. Not like an America's Cupper of course, but without having to blush either.

Looking vaguely like the north end of a displacement sailboat that's been fastened to the south end of a trawler, the Nordhavn 56 has a protected afterdeck with a very spacious swim platform. It also has a fully enclosed pilothouse and a surprisingly powerful sailplan, with a furling main and headsail.

Earlier motorsailers of the Rhodes and S&S era often had raised center cockpits, but the cockpit on this Nordhavn is forward. Tucked between the pilothouse and mast, it provides a second, fair-weather, helm and comes complete with a brace of electric winches.

Inside, the vessel is equally seaworthy, starting with a pilothouse/saloon that is, not surprisingly, reminiscent of a traditional Nordhavn trawler. The galley is below and secure to starboard, with a layout that can generate hot meals in all conditions. The full-beam master suite is aft, with a queen-sized berth and all amenities. An equally spacious VIP guest suite is forward.

Nordhavn's main saloon and steering station

Hands-on owners will love the engine room, which not only has 6ft 4in of headroom, but enough space for a couple of buddies to stand around discussing technical issues. Power is provided by a detuned 165hp Lugger diesel that can push the boat to its 9.6-knot hull speed. Designer Jeff Leishman figures she can average nearly 8 knots on ocean crossings when motorsailing.

BRUCKMANN 50 MK II

This Mark Ellis-designed vessel is the second iteration of the popular Bruckmann series he and builder Mark Bruckmann call a "pilothouse cruising sloop," as opposed to a motorsailer. This particular version has a longer waterline, an integral stern platform and an optional 200-hp John Deere diesel. I suppose you could call it a cruising sloop and no one would object. But from my perspective, if it quacks like a duck and swims like a duck—which it does—it's a motorsailer.

In this case, it's one with a 10-knot cruising speed (it can reach 12 if necessary) while sipping diesel at less than 5 gallons an hour. Under sail, Ellis has recorded reaching speeds of 10 knots in 18 knots of apparent wind.

The boats are endowed with graceful lines, from the large pilothouse to the sweet sheer. Unlike some other motorsailer designs, the Bruckmann's sailing cockpit, with full controls, is aft. There's a secondary station, at the forward end of the pilothouse which also functions as the main saloon.

To date, most of the interior layouts have a large owner's cabin with private head and shower forward, a second cabin just aft and a day head that is directly across to port. Most of the interiors also have what I

Bruckmann 50 MK II

PHOTOS BY BOB GRIESER (ABOVE); COURTESY OF BRUCKMANN YACHTS (BELOW)

Island Packet SP Cruiser

would describe as a bonus room that functions as a library or den. Directly across from the galley, it can be made into an office, media room or whatever you wish.

ISLAND PACKET SP CRUISER

Designer and Island Packet CEO Bob Johnson wanted this to be a boat that would provide trawler-like comfort and performance, along with good sailing speed. He also wanted it to be manageable for shorthanded sailing. It's won a number of awards, including *SAIL*'s Best Boats Award for Innovation. The 41-foot SP Cruiser is the first boat of its size to have all-electric sail controls. The system, developed with Lewmar, features captive-reel sheet winches and push-button handling.

Like the Nordhavn, the cockpit is forward, but without a permanent helm. Wireless controls are optional. Inside the pilothouse is a pair of comfortable helm chairs surrounded by strong opening windows. The master suite is forward with a head and shower that can also double as a day head, as there is access from both the saloon and the aft stateroom that is nicely appointed with a 110hp Yanmar diesel pushes the boat at a very respectable 8.9 knots, and the 215-gallon fuel tank yields a power-only range, at cruising speed, of 1,000 miles.

SHANNON 53 HPS

This new Shannon motorsailer certainly seems to qualify as an example of out-of-the-box thinking, with its plumb bow and an afterdeck I feel comfortable describing as a "back porch." In addition to a pilothouse, a raised cockpit and three steering wheels, the 53 HPS manages to fit in four staterooms (one doubles as a utility room) and two heads. The owner's stateroom is aft, opening onto the hardtop-covered porch, a guest stateroom is forward, and a double-bunk cabin is opposite the galley. In addition to providing the inside helm station, the pilothouse also serves as the saloon and dining area.

Another unusual feature is an optional pair of Yanmar 125hp diesels, as opposed to the standard, single 259hp Lugger. With twins, the engines angle inboard so the leeward engine can run (with proper oil circulation) while the boat is heeled. Either way, the builder claims the boat can cruise at 15 knots while consuming only 7 gallons an hour.

The SP Cruiser's comfortable helm station

The sailing rig can be either a Scutter (a short-rigged cutter) or a Sketch (a short ketch), with an air draft that will fit under the 64-foot bridges on the Intracoastal Waterway. Designer and builder Walter Schulz says his shoal-draft design (it draws less than 5 feet) provides good windward performance.

After 90 years, the modern motorsailer still lives in a Never-Never Land between a pure sailing auxiliary and a powerboat. The concept continues to defy any simple definition, but given the increasing cost of fuel and the increased interest in voyaging, there seem to be more and more of them motoring, and sailing, around. Motorsailers may not be for everyone, but for some, they are absolutely perfect.

RESOURCES

Bruckmann Yachts, bruckmannyachts.com
Island Packet Yachts, ipy.com
Nordhavn, nordhavn.com
Shannon Yachts, shannonyachts.com
Ted Hood Yachts, tedhoodyachts.com

Shannon 53 HPS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ISLAND PACKET YACHTS (ABOVE); COURTESY OF SHANNON YACHTS (BELOW)