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Performance Bred

The Dehler 46 harkens back to a pedigree of speed, but with plenty of comforts to ensure the crew enjoys the ride. *By Mark Pillsbury*

A question that comes to mind when I get to sail a new boat is this: If it were my vessel, how would I use it? Each sailboat is different, after all, and built to suit a purpose.

Sometimes the answer isn't readily apparent, but when I pointed the bow of the new Dehler 46 just off the wind in about 12 knots of breeze, and my host for the day sheeted in the sails, I had no doubt in my mind what I'd do with the latest performance cruiser from Germany: I'd grab a few pals or my wife and another couple and go sailing. Up the coast, an island adventure, around the buoys — it would all be fun, and the 46 is roomy and versatile enough to handle any of the above with ease.

The Dehler brand has been around since Willi and Heinz Dehler started building dinghies in Germany in 1963. They soon moved on to bigger boats that earned a reputation for quickness in European racing circles, and that led to

hulls numbering well into the thousands. Dehler was taken over by Hanse Yachts in 2009, and in 2013, the company released the Judel/Vrolijk-designed Dehler 38, which won *CW's* Boat of the Year honors for Best Cruising Sailboat under 38 Feet, and European Yacht of the Year bragging rights in the Performance Cruiser category for 2014.

The new 46 is also a collaboration between the in-house engineering team (which includes Karl Dehler, the founder's son) and Judel/Vrolijk. With a displacement-to-length ratio of 146 and a sail area-to-displacement of 23.2 for the standard model, this is another Dehler that tips the racer/cruiser scale toward the performance side of the continuum.

Or to put it another way, it's a blast to sail. With the full-batten main hoisted and a 106 percent jib set on the below-deck Furllex furler, the rail dipped, the boat sprang forward, and off we went at

7.6 knots, gaining another half-knot or better when we bore off to a near reach. It took a matter of minutes at one of the twin wheels to feel right at home on the helm, and the first time we tacked, I thought I was driving a sports car.

Thanks to the low-profile cabin house, visibility forward was excellent when steering from both the high and low sides, and the jib telltales were always in sight. Just two (minor) quibbles: I missed not having a footrest of some sort at either helm to brace against when heeled. (The owner, it turns out, opted not to install the teak ones that came from the factory.) And the jib sheets were led to winches fairly far forward in the cockpit, making them hard to get to if singlehanded, though perfect when there are extra hands aboard who want elbow room to help trim sail.

A fold-down transom converts into a swim platform for when you're in harbor.



Down below, the Dehler 46 is designed around the off-watch needs of the crew. The leaf on the large dining table folds out to seat a crew of six or more (left). The nav station (right) slides aft, and a spacer and cushion can be used to convert the settee forward of it into a sea berth.

The solution, of course, would be to lead the jib sheets back to the second set of Lewmar winches located just forward of each wheel, where the two ends of the double-ended German-style mainsheet were tailed on the boat we sailed. Each end of the mainsheet was led through a line stopper so both winches could be easily freed up. In that arrangement, the Lewmar traveler spanning the width of the cockpit would be used to tweak the main when tacking upwind. Two additional winches are located on the cabin top — a manual one for reefing lines, and an electric winch for the main halyard.

Dehler bonds a carbon grid into the hull for stiffness. The hull itself is vacuum-infused, with a foam core, using polyester resin. Layup includes an outside layer of isophthalic gelcoat, followed by a layer of vinylester resin to prevent blistering. Bulkheads (the main one is cored) are glassed to the hull and balsa-cored deck.

A number of options for exterior color and interior finish are offered. The boat we sailed featured cherry woodwork, a dark Australian acacia sole and gray upholstery. With 14 opening hatches (two large ones in the saloon; a third in the owner's cabin forward) and ports, light and ventilation are excellent.

Stepping down from the companionway's curved stairs, a well-equipped L-shaped galley is to starboard; there's a head compartment to port. Dehler makes interesting use of head space, both here and in the forward cabin, by separating the toilet and sink with a door. A fold-down seat/cover in effect turns the head into a stall shower.

The boat we sailed had twin aft cabins, each with a double berth and large hanging locker. (The port aft cabin can also be set up with bunks.)

Forward of the head, a nav station slides aft, and a cushion can be added to the settee, turning it into a full-length sea berth. Opposite is the U-shaped dinette, with a centerline bench. The owners accommodations are spacious and include a centerline island queen with storage under, plus a hanging locker.

Topside, low-profile cockpit coamings make stepping out on deck effortless. Shrouds are led to outboard chainplates, which helps to keep the pathway forward uncluttered. Adjustable jib-sheet fairleads are inboard, next to the cabin house, to allow tight sheeting angles. I really liked the low chart-plotter pods just forward of each wheel in the cockpit. The B&G displays mounted on them were easily viewed, and they won't catch sheets when maneuvering.

The boat we sailed had a shoal-draft keel; for those looking for more performance, standard and racing foils are available, as are a carbon mast and boom. This boat had an optional 76-horsepower turbocharged Volvo diesel. (A 55 horsepower is standard.) The price, including B&G electronics and other options, totaled about \$450,000 as fit out. (A base boat is priced at \$327,000.)

Hanse positions its Dehler brand as the boat for an owner seeking creature comforts, but not at the expense of sailing performance. The new 46 hits that part of the design brief spot-on.

Mark Pillsbury is CW's editor.

DEHLER 46

LOA	47' 4"	(14.40 m)
LWL	42' 3"	(12.90 m)
Beam	14' 3"	(4.35 m)
Draft (Std.)	7' 5"	(2.25 m)
Sail area (Std.)	1,228 sq. ft.	(114.1 sq m)
Ballast	(Std.) 7,716 lb.	(3,500 kg)
Displacement	(Std.) 24,696 lb.	(11,200 kg)
Ballast/D	0.31	
D/L	146	
SA/D	23.2	
Water	119 gal.	(450 l)
Fuel	55 gal.	(210 l)
Holding	30 gal.	(114 l)
Mast height (Std.)	69' 7"	(21.20 m)
Engine	76 hp Volvo, saildrive	
Designer	Judel/Vrolijk & Co.	
Price	\$327,000	

Dehler Yachts
978-358-8336
dehler.com

SEA TRIAL

Wind speed	12 to 14 knots
Sea state	0.5 to 1 feet
Sailing	
Closehauled	7.6 knots
Reaching	8.2 knots
Motoring	
Cruise (2,400 rpm)	8.2 knots
Fast (2,850 rpm)	8.8 knots