



Photos by Roy Laughlin

In the wake of the innovative Hunter 49 launched in 2006, America's largest sailboat builder introduces their new 45 Deck Saloon sloop

BWS tests the new Hunter 45DS

It was a blazing afternoon in St. Augustine, Fla., in early August as we climbed aboard the new Hunter 45DS, fired up the engine and motored

out through the cut into the ocean. Ashore, the air had been so still and heavy that it seemed to lie over the land like a blanket. But to the northwest we could see giant thun-

derclouds building and knew that before long we would get a breeze, if not more.

With Hunter's test pilot Steve Pettingill at the helm, the new

45DS backed easily away from the dock and then pivoted in its own length. The 54-horsepower Yanmar and three bladed prop offered plenty of power and control, so when Steve put the throttle down, the new 45 accelerated steadily until soon we were cranking along

boat lengths, which is not bad at all.

Outside the cut and in deep water, we rolled out the roller furling mainsail and then fell off the wind to roll out the jib. There was still not much breeze but it was gathering from the southeast so we shut down the engine and headed off

inside the shrouds.

The cockpit layout in the new 45 DS uses many of the design ideas that were developed for last year's new 49 footer. With twin wheels aft, the jib sheets and the main sheet are led to winches right next to the helmsman's seats so you can



George Day at the helm of the new Hunter 45DS, enjoying a sail off of St. Augustine, Fla. The wrap-around windows of the deck saloon, opposite, give the boat a modern look and plenty of light down below

through the flat water at 8.5 knots.

While still under power we put the new boat through its paces before heading out for a sail trial. At 6 knots, and with the helm hard over, the 45 has a turning radius of one and a half boat lengths, which is what you need if you are mooring in a crowded marina. At full throttle and going 8.4 knots, we slammed the transmission into reverse to see how long it would take the boat to stop: we gauged three

toward the Gulf Stream.

The new 45 has a B & R rig, which has long swept-back spreaders, a moderately tall mast and shrouds that run to chainplates that are outboard. Hunter has been using B & R rigs for years and has worked out the engineering with extensive tests and a lot of sea miles. The rig does not require a backstay and because the chainplates are outboard, the side decks are clear fore and aft. The 110-percent jib sheets

steer and trim at the same time. The boat we sailed was supplied with optional electric winches, so tweaking the mainsail or jib was a snap. The main sheet is double ended so the sail can be trimmed aft at the port helm or at the winch mounted on the coach roof next to the companionway.

Like her sisterships, the 45 has a large stainless steel cockpit arch that carries the main traveler and provides anchor points for cockpit



The roller furling genoa and mainsail and the aft-led control lines make the 45DS simple to sail for a couple or even singlehanded. The wide, flat foredeck would be an ideal space for offshore dinghy storage



covers. The prototype we tested has a unique T-top bimini mounted on the arch, which provides much needed shade for the crew. The traveler on top of the arch runs nearly the full width of the boat and can be adjusted with lanyards that are handy to both steering stations. Because most of the sailing power of the rig is in the mainsail, making traveler adjustments really becomes essential to the balance of the boat and optimum trim.

We filled both sails and started to play with trim to see how close-winded the new boat would be. The breeze was now up to about 8 knots, so we had enough pressure to get the hull moving well. At 45 degrees to the true wind, we got the new boat sailing at just under 6 knots. Falling off a bit, boat speed climbed to just over six. Not bad.

Tacking the 45 is simple since the headsail is so small, and in the breeze we had, the sheet could be trimmed almost by hand. The electric winches eased the final trim and we settled the boat down on a new angle just under 90 degrees tack to tack.

The two steering wheels offer excellent positions for sailing the boat. To windward you have great

visibility forward and can see the luff of the jib and the telltales as well as the upper sections of the mainsail. Sitting at the leeward wheel you can see the whole jib and can ease and trim the sail with the winch right in front of you. With the T-top in place, it is hard to see the mainsail from the leeward position.

We tacked the 45 back and forth for about an hour before jibing around, setting the cruising chute and heading downwind. Through the tack and the jibe, the feel on the helm was smooth and responsive. Off the wind, the boat steered true and did not tend to wander or round up.

The hull of the new 45DS is the same as on the highly successful Hunter 44. For the new boat, Hunter was aiming to create a larger more comfortable aft cockpit, a larger aft stateroom without sacrificing the main saloon, and to give the boat a striking new appearance—all without losing the 44's good sailing characteristics.

The 45 has a modern moderate displacement hull with a sharp entry at the bow and a broad transom. The bow sections are actually concave just aft of the bow, so the

boat cuts very neatly into waves as it moves through them. Hunter has given the boat a new transom that looks good and opens up space inside the hull for a lot of additional storage. Two lead keel options are available, either a deep cruising fin or a shoal fin with ballast wings. The rudder on the boat is large by racer/cruiser standards, so the helm always turns the boat with authority.

DECK LAYOUT AND SAIL PLAN

The new deck layout is Hunter's variation on the deck-saloon style that has become popular in the last decade. The wrap-around, tinted windows look modern and stylish while providing a lot of natural light in the saloon. The foredeck is fairly flat so it is a good working platform for hoisting and lowering the cruising chute. Plus, it is a good lounging area that can be fitted

The companionway-mounted displays are easy to read from either of the dual helms. The unique arch-mounted traveler keeps the cockpit clear and can also be easily used from both steering stations



with cushions for lazy afternoons in the sun. For offshore sailing, a 10-foot inflatable could be stowed forward of the mast.

The top of the raised coach roof flows aft into the cockpit coaming, which provides an area at the front of the cockpit that is quite well protected from spray. With a dodger added, the cockpit will be secure and dry in wet and lumpy weather.

With a displacement of 22,936 pounds, the design is moderately light and has a displacement-length ratio of 170, which indicates that the hull is easily driven in light airs (which we found out) and capable of reaching theoretical hull speed (8.4 knots) in a wide range of wind speeds. The beam of 14 feet, 6 inches is generous and provides a lot of interior volume for accommodations. However, the length-to-beam ratio of 2.7 falls right in line with modern, moderate displacement cruising boats.

With the roller furling main-sail—fitted with full length vertical

battens—and the roller furling 110-percent jib, the 45 did not seem to have a lot of sail area when we looked at it from the deck and when we trimmed in the rising breeze. But, the sail-area-to-displacement ratio calculates out to 18.3 which is reasonably high for a cruising boat. The intention is to give the boat enough horsepower to perform in lighter breezes and a simple furling rig that can be reefed quickly and easily from the cockpit when the wind does come up.

CONSTRUCTION

The hull of the 45 is hand laminated in a female mold. Below the waterline the laminate is solid fiberglass with two-layers of Kevlar cloth in the forward sections that add impact resistance. Above the waterline, the hull is balsa cored, which adds stiffness to the hull and improves sound and heat insulation.

The deck is hand laminated and cored with marine grade plywood. All attachment points for deck hardware are solid fiberglass and reinforced with backing plates. The hull deck joint is an outward flange

that is joined with 3M's 5200 and mechanically fastened with both screws and bolts.

The boat's interior structural grid is laminated in one piece and attached to the interior of the hull with an advanced adhesive. The grid strengthens and stiffens the hull, provides an anchor for the keel bolts and is the base for all of the interior furniture. With the bulkheads tabbed in place and joined to the hull and deck, the whole structure combines into a single reinforced unit. This construction technique, refined over the years, has proven to be both very durable and efficient.

Hunter's Steve Pettingill is the man to put new boats through a series of on-the-water and on-the-beach tests. He is a vastly experienced sailor and has competed in numerous transoceanic and round-the-world events. His job is to see if new boats have been engineered and built to the standards required by ocean sailing. One of the first tests he puts a new boat through is to run it up on a sandy beach at hull speed. The 45 we sailed had recently been through such a test coming through with flying colors.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The accommodation plan in the 45DS has been created for two cou-



The attractive, cherry finished interior has a large nav station with plenty of space for additional electronics and a spacious galley with all the comforts of home

ples to cruise together in comfort and privacy. The after cabin under the cockpit has a large center-line double berth right under the cockpit that can be accessed easily from both sides. Bench seats with lockers beneath are built in on both sides of the berth and two hanging lockers are provided. For those who wish to add a washer-dryer unit, the port hanging locker can be converted for the purpose.

The master head is at the base of the companionway and has a large separate shower stall that will double as a good wet locker where foul weather gear can be stowed on rainy days.

The guest cabin forward has a Pullman double berth to port, a huge hanging locker and a small vanity with a sink and storage lockers. The forward head compartment is in the forepeak where it is out of the way but close at hand.

The saloon has a large U-shaped dinette to port with plenty of locker space behind it. To starboard is a bench settee, again with lockers behind. Both the dinette and the settee will make comfortable sea berths for overnight passages.

The 45DS's galley has a vast Corian counter, twin stainless steel sinks and a two burner propane stove. A side loading fridge is placed under the counter amidships and a

side-loading freezer can be positioned aft of the stove.

Hunter has opted to build the interiors of their new boats in all cherry finishes. The wood is light and cheerful and looks elegant. With a satin varnish finish, the saloon of the 45DS makes a comfortable floating home where owners and their guests will be able to relax in style.

BWS THOUGHTS

We never made it out to the Gulf Stream during our sail trials in August nor did we get a chance to sail the boat in rough weather. But we did have a fine beat to windward and a pleasant run downwind with the cruising chute as the afternoon breeze continued to fill in under the looming black clouds of the thunderhead that was bearing down on us.

Back at the dock we poked around every nook and cranny of the new boat from stem to stern. The basic construction of the 45DS is sound and well engineered. The fit and finish on deck and below looks good and will provide owners with a low maintenance floating home that has the space and the style for fun cruising. The engineering systems are all of top marine grade and installed with regular maintenance in mind. Access to

pumps, thru-hulls and all engine systems is very good.

The new generation of Hunter cruising boats that have been coming off the production line in the last three years has proven to be very successful in the market place. The boats are distinctive, well thought out, easy to sail and maneuver around the docks and comfortable to live aboard. That they are also a great value is a bonus every cruiser can appreciate. ~

HUNTER 45DS

LOA	44'10"
LWL	39'2"
Beam	14'6"
Draft (shoal)	5'0"
Draft (deep)	6'6"
Displacement	22,936 lbs.
Ballast (shoal)	7,389 lbs.
Ballast (deep)	7,237 lbs.
Sail Area (furling)	925 sq. ft.
Water	140 gals.
Fuel	51 gals.
Engine	54-hp Yanmar

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