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Contest 42CS



At almost 13 metres long the 42CS is no baby, but she is the newest arrival to the Contest family. We sent Graham Snook to Holland to test her mettle on the IJsselmeer

PHOTOS: GRAHAMSNOOK.COM



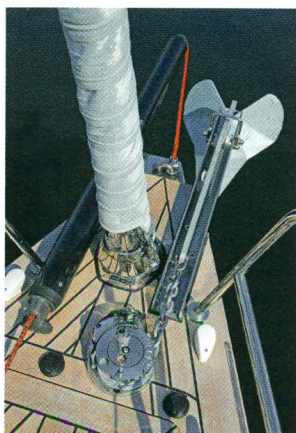
ABOVE: The unobstructed deck looks great but lacks grab rails forward

To my mind the phrase 'family business' conjures up colloquial little '& Son' enterprises passed down from generation to generation, rarely amounting to much – and if they do, they are sold to companies that lack the ethos and passion of the founder. But for 55 years Contest Yachts has been in the Conijn family's safe hands. The current head of the company, Arjen Conijn, is grandson of the founder Ed; his sister Annick heads marketing.

Grandfather Conijn's first yacht – the Contest 25 – is a far cry from their current range of 42-72 ft luxury yachts. I travelled to Contest's home town of Medemblik, on the IJsselmeer, to test the newest arrival, the 42CS. Originally conceived as a 40-footer, Contest found that to fit in everything it wanted, she had to grow.

Performance

What started as a grey, windless day with the threat of rain hanging gloomily overhead, finished as the sort of day most sailors dream about. We set full genoa and mainsail once clear of Medemblik, but with little wind the figures



The bow area is neat, compact and well laid out

weren't worth noting, so instead the asymmetric spinnaker was hoisted. No sooner had the snuffer shot skyward, the breeze started to pick up. At around 90° off 6 knots of apparent wind she was making 7 knots with ease. As the wind increased to 13-14 knots apparent (11 knots true) she barrelled along at 7.9-8.5 knots. With around 2.5-3.0m of water beneath her keel,

there may even have been some shallow water effect holding her back. After 15 minutes the fun had to stop, so we dropped the kite and continued the test. With the true wind around 13 knots, 15-16 knots apparent at 60°, she was making 8.0-8.2 knots. Taking her up higher to 27-30° she was making 7.5-7.7 in 14-17 knots. Later, in 18-20 knots she logged 8.0-8.3 knots. Bearing away to 90°, whereas before with the bright pink asymmetric she had danced, now under white sails only we were making a far more leisurely

5.0-5.3 knots in 7 knots of wind. At 120° this increased slightly to 5.8-6.0 in 8.2-8.4 knots. At 150°, the apparent wind fell to 3.2-7.0 knots, her speed dropping further to 4.7-5.1 knots. Goosewinging on a dead run she made 5.0-5.5 knots in around 5.5 knots apparent. It was time to head back upwind to Medemblik. The wind was now a nice force 4, the sun was bright and the sailing effortless. On the way in, the 54hp Yanmar gave us a steady 6.8 knots at 2,000 rpm.

At the helm

Three versions are available, all with different mainsail sheeting: Performance, with a recessed mainsheet track in front of the wheels; Cruising, with the mainsheet taken forward of the spray hood; or Short-handed, with the mainsheet taken to a single Andersen 46ST electric winch. We tested the latter. No surprise, then, that nearly everything was within reach of either wheel. To starboard are in/out buttons for the electric mainsail and genoa furling, plus a button to sheet the starboard electric 46ST on the coachroof (port is manual), although you do have to visit this winch to ease it. To port, the button for the genoa



Beautifully built, stylish and comfortable; the Contest 42CS has it all

winch is to hand when you're at that wheel.

The outboard end of the cockpit sole, at the helmsman's feet, is angled up at around 20°, so it's horizontal when she heels, making it comfortable to stand to leeward and steer. I found the coaming by the wheel a little narrow to sit on comfortably. The radius on the inboard corner could be enlarged, or teak-capped and the seats aft of the helm dished to improve comfort when heeled. But these are minor niggles on an otherwise excellent helm. Beneath the aft seats are two cavernous lazarette lockers.

Design & construction

The hull is vacuum-infused in a single-piece mould. It remains in this mould for a month while stringers, bulkheads and reinforcements are added. The hull is balsa-cored, except at the keel, which is solid laminate. Spaces between the balsa cubes fill with vinyl ester resin during the infusion process, creating individual sealed blocks that limit water ingress in the event



She shares her purposeful looks with the rest of the modern Contest family

of a hull breach. It then takes a further seven months to finish the build.

Sailplan

The clew of the 108 per cent genoa tucks neatly inboard of the shrouds on cockpit-adjustable genoa cars. Our test boat had electric furling for both mainsail and genoa, and electric winches, which makes sail-handling almost effortless.

Deck layout

The deck is uncluttered, helped by taking lines from the mast invisibly up the inside of the window mullions – very neat. The high, near-vertically sided coachroof makes good bracing on the windward deck,

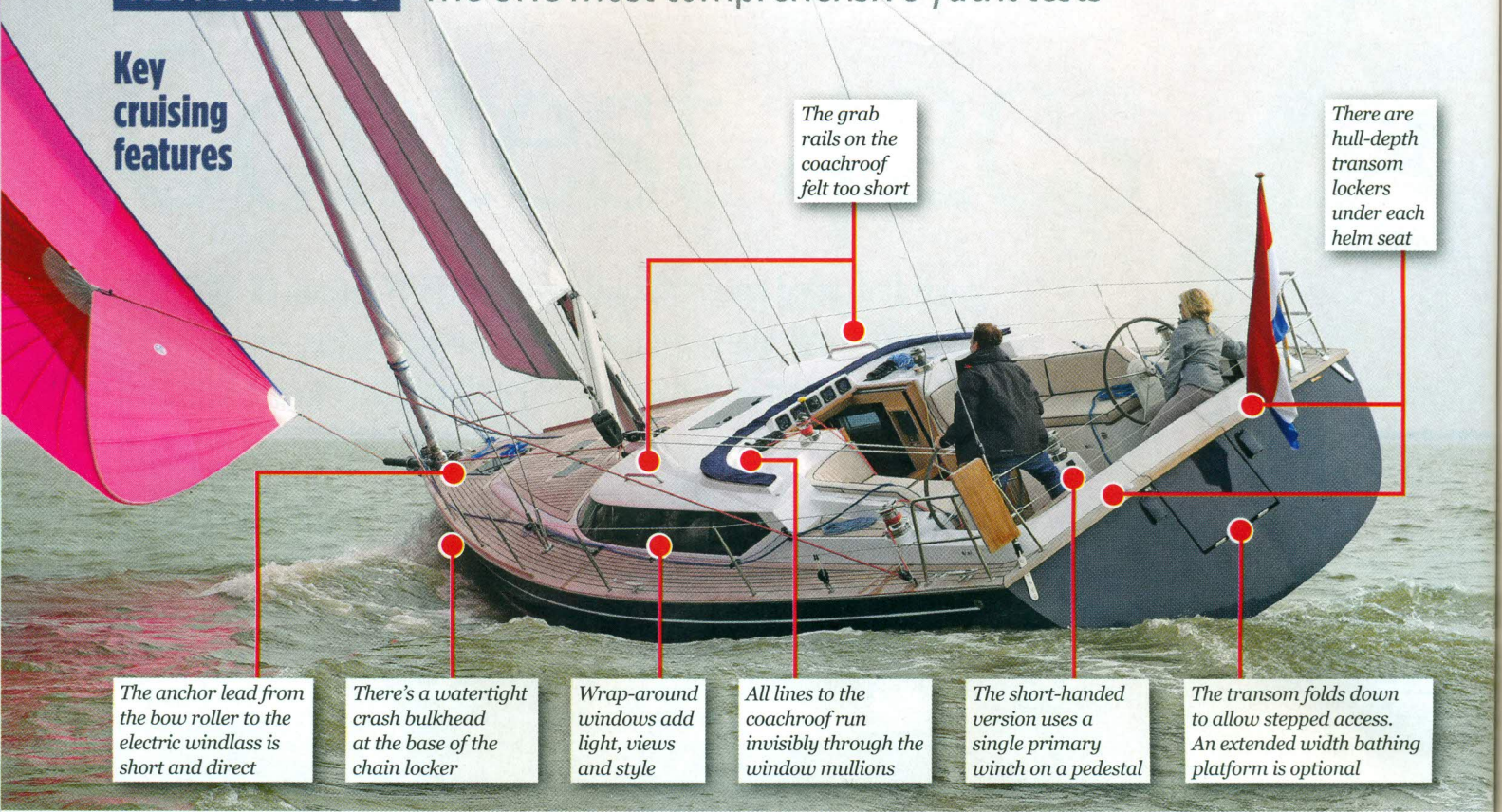
but to leeward the lack of inboard leaning angle means the deck felt a little narrow. This wasn't helped by the owner of the test boat specifying no toerails aft of the mast. There are two options available for the after end of the cockpit seating – the standard is open, the Lounging version has a low coaming forming curved backrests and enclosed seats.

I felt the handrails on the coachroof forward of the sprayhood were too short. There is little to hold onto forward of the mast, too, but the lovely, low, curved coachroof does much to aid underfoot grip.

Living aboard

The large, wrap-around glass windows that define much of her exterior styling really come into their own down below. With the addition of a 94cm x 12cm (3ft 1in x 5in) eye-level (when seated) hull port on each side, the interior overflows with natural light – so much so that the sleeping areas seem dark in comparison. Considering their purpose this is no bad thing. The →

Key cruising features



The grab rails on the coachroof felt too short

There are hull-depth transom lockers under each helm seat

The anchor lead from the bow roller to the electric windlass is short and direct

There's a watertight crash bulkhead at the base of the chain locker

Wrap-around windows add light, views and style

All lines to the coachroof run invisibly through the window mullions

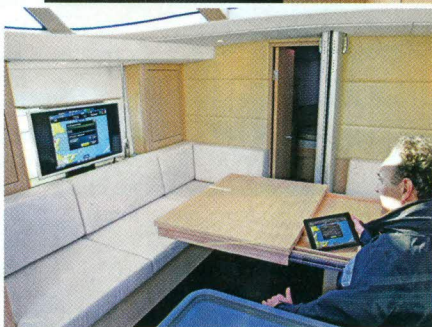
The short-handed version uses a single primary winch on a pedestal

The transom folds down to allow stepped access. An extended width bathing platform is optional

grain of the oak interior (teak is also available) is emphasised by all this light, so it's just as well that it all matches seamlessly.

The hull ports are flanked by shelved cupboards, the aft ones being 48cm wide and 25cm deep (19in x 10in). However, though the same width, the depth of the forward units tapers from 15cm (6in) deep to just 7.5cm (3in), so not the most practical. Contest offers semi-custom interiors for every other boat in its range, but for the 42CS it has various standard layouts to choose from in each section: three forward, three aft and five for the central galley/saloon. I went aboard two finished boats and a third in build, and couldn't decide which layout I'd choose.

On entering the forward cabin, to starboard was a shower, to port was a separate heads. In future models this forward layout will have a combined heads/shower to starboard and gains hanging stowage, which is currently absent. The white-painted hull sides continue the clean, stylish design forward. The forward berth was 1.63m (5ft 4in) at shoulder width and almost 6ft 6in (2.0m) long. Under the heavy mattress, ventilated stowage was quartered. Only the starboard forward section was actually available for stowage, starboard aft being occupied by a water tank while to port were the batteries



The galley could be improved (above). The saloon table conceals the chart table (inset)

TV can be used as a repeater, so the whole crew can be involved in route planning. But where to keep the iPad? That's the clever bit. A simple paddle lever under the aft inboard corner of the saloon table releases the tabletop, which then slides smoothly to port, on bearing-assisted runners, revealing a 60cm x 59cm (18in x 18in) stowage bin for paper charts, with additional partitions for a laptop or iPad. The tabletop also unfolds to starboard, doubling its size to ensure everyone has ample room.

Galley

The grey Corian-topped, L-shaped galley offers a wide workspace. Recessed finger holds in the lids of the two top-opening fridges (one fridge is standard) do away with finger-snapping latches. There is no obvious bracing, nor a crash-bar for working at the stove, which gimbals better on a starboard tack than port. The lack of a splash-back, a second sink/drain and dedicated bottle and crockery stowage could all be easily rectified.

Maintenance

A look into the 34cm-deep (13in) bilge shows some great attention to detail – labels aplenty, everything neatly cable-tied and drain-down taps for both hot and cold freshwater systems.

Open the engine access and you're immediately confronted with the primary fuel filters and raw water strainers for the engine and generator. Only access to the Yanmar diesel's oil filter let the side down.

for the optional retractable bow thruster. Beneath the sole is the shower sump.

Chart table

A cursory glance around the saloon revealed the absence of a dedicated chart table. If you want a conventional nav station, it is available in four of the five optional interiors. Acknowledging that a lot of navigation is now electronic, one navigation package offers an Apple iPad integrated with either Raymarine or, as on our test boat, B&G Zeus. Even the optional

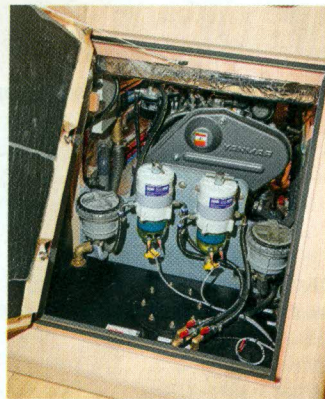
Contest 42CS



ARTWORK: MAXINE HEATH

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Price €548,000 inc VAT (approx. £437,747)
- LOA 12.85m (42ft 1in)
- LWL 11.76 m (38ft 7in)
- Beam 4.15m (13ft 7in)
- Draught 2.2m (7ft 3in)
- Displacement 11,000kg (24,251 lb)
- Ballast 4,600kg (10,141 lb)
- Sail area 104m² (1,118sq ft)
- Engine 54hp Yanmar
- Diesel 250 lit (55gal)
- Water 480 lit (105gal)
- D/L ratio 188.2
- SA/D ratio 21.4
- Ballast ratio 41.8%
- RCD category A
- STIX 48.0
- Designer Georg Nissen
- Builder Contest Yachts (www.contestyachts.com)



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The forward cabin is spacious and well appointed

OUR VERDICT ON THE BOAT

What's she like to sail?

She was fitted with my favourite steering system, Jefa, but wasn't as light on the helm as I would have expected. It was firm and responsive, and gave good feedback, but it just wasn't finger light – possibly due to having the second wheel to turn. She is a very solid boat to sail, no creaks, squeaks, groans or moans. With no mainsheet track on this version, when she was overpowered (close-hauled with more than 20 knots apparent), the sheet had to be released from the self-tailing winch before being eased. This isn't as simple or quick as flicking it down the track or out of a cascade block jammer. Nothing untoward happens if the sheet isn't instantly released – the helm just gets heavier and she heels more.

The cockpit works well. The crew can sit aft, tend winches and keep conversation with the helmsman while using the mainsheet pedestal as a foot brace. Or they can move clear of the action and relax on the curved-corner coaming forward.

What's she like in port and at anchor?

The anchor lead from bow roller to Maxwell electric windlass is short and direct; the chain is pre-marked at 10m intervals. The buttons are forward of the chain locker lid, so you can't have the lid open to see the chain whilst standing on the buttons. You could, however, to stand in the locker (the watertight crash-space below means the sole is raised) and press the buttons by hand.

For long-term cruising I would like small inspection hatches in the long, cumbersome cabin sole boards, just enough for a quick daily peek into the bilge. Once the Mastervolt CANbus touch-screen control panel is out of direct sunlight (so you can see it), and you've mastered using it, living on board would be a real joy. The large windows might not make a deck saloon *per se*, but they add light and views where so many boats don't.

It's a sign of the times that many builders are removing or hiding chart tables. The option to have one is there, but if you don't want to write off a couple of cubic metres of internal space to an area you only occasionally use on passage, you don't have to.

Would she suit you and your crew?

The Short-handed central winch version (standard) worked well, although for long-distance voyaging the Cruising version would accommodate the all-important bimini. The Lounging cockpit's enclosed after ends add more sprawling options to the already comfy cockpit. They also prevent the snoozing occupant's feet straying into the wheel, which can't be a nice way to wake up!

There's no denying the 42CS is a lovely, well thought-out boat – with a price tag to match. She's not the nimblest on the water, but she has the refined family traits of her larger siblings. All are built to go places in style and comfort; the 42CS is no different. It's difficult to review a boat where so much is a movable feast. The current owner's requirements didn't entirely fit my own, as mine wouldn't fit theirs. That's boats for you. Many of my criticisms and comments could easily be addressed, should I suffer a lottery win. Contest has been building boats for 55 years and I doubt I'd be their fussiest customer. The yard understands that boat owners are individuals and, while not semi-custom in name, offers enough variants to be considered such. After all, with a total of 45 different combinations of interior layouts available, finding something to suit your style of sailing shouldn't be a problem. Choosing one might be.

Would she suit your style of sailing?

CREEK CRAWLING
☆☆☆☆☆

COASTAL PORT-HOPPING
★★★★★

OFFSHORE PASSAGE-MAKING
★★★★★

TRADE WIND VOYAGING
★★★★★

HIGH-LATITUDE ADVENTURE
★★★★★