

Slippery... very slippery

An elegant new one-design created specifically for lighter-air venues is already turning heads on the Swiss Lakes with its exceptional performance and dramatic modern appearance. Michael Aeppli introduces the Onyx 28

The 'idea'

The Onyx project is not led by professionals, but by three maniacs with full-time jobs, sacrificing all their spare time and putting peaceful family life on the line.

Motivation We are all tired of sailing ORC Cruiser/Racers in so-called 'distance races'.

Goal Introducing a one-design daysailer for racing on the lakes. Club racing, match racing (the sponsored Clup-Cup goes with the boat, but that is another story!) and sailing with sponsors (for example UBS during the St Moritz Match Race). Therefore the boat can carry up to six people.

The people

Thomas Cantz (40) Professional engineer and local sailing hero, active industrial and sailing boat designer since he could first drive a calculator.

Patrick Stöckli (42) Swiss sailing champion and a talented salesman. Has brought in the first four sponsors on four-year contracts and is now in discussion with other interested parties.

Michael Aeppli (50) Passionate amateur sailor and marketing and communications adviser with good connections to the Swiss sailing scene (Swiss Federation, UBS/Alinghi) and good media relations. This helps a lot! My job is communication and the positioning of the Onyx as 'the' sportsboat for lakes.

The boat

Light to middle air focus but manageable in a breeze

The concept is based on the conditions we find on our lakes most of the time, but this is not just another boat with a long mast and a vast sail area. It is about fine construction, minimal wetted surface and accurately optimised foils.

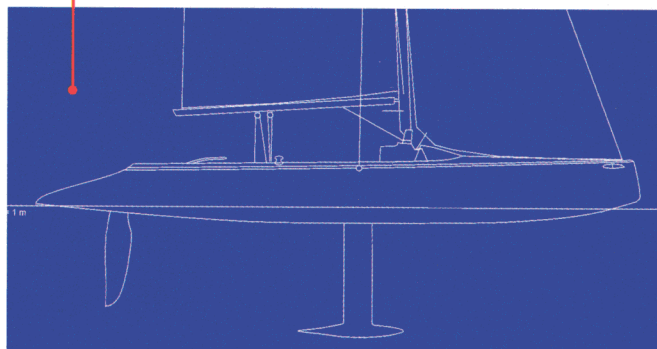
Distribution of volume The hull is relatively full in the bow and very slim on the waterline in the midships area. Together with minimised rocker the boat produces hardly any mid-section pressure wave compared with a normal yacht. As a result, there is no feeling of a hullspeed barrier (also key of course is the low weight).

Rig Good performance also stems from the high-aspect ratio rig and a rotating wingmast. Full-scale tests confirm this to us and the boat gains momentum in the lightest of breezes. Picking up speed produces more apparent wind and so on... this is very important on the lakes! Concerning the sail development we have placed our faith in the experience of Tornado champion Andrew Landenberger (www.landenberger-sailing.com).

Performance Boatspeed downwind under typical lake conditions: true wind 7kt, flat water, crew of three (230kg), downwind with gennaker (maximising speed not VMG) over 10-11kt (measured with GPS). Not bad.

Construction and specification

To achieve our goals a good professional boatyard was essential. It was easy to choose Jose Steinmayer (www.steinmayer.ch), a top

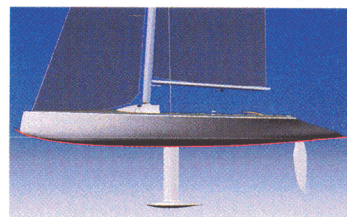


Swiss builder of Star boats, 5.5-Meters and one-offs.

- The Onyx is built in epoxy/airex sandwich with carbon reinforcement
- Constructed in female moulds with vacuum-bagging
- The general shape is quite V-ee'd or even trapezoidal
- 8.5m LOA, 2.20m B, draft 1.8m, displacement 850kg, ballast 60% (elliptic bulb)
- Mainsail 25m², jib 13m², gennaker 70m². Wingmast has an equivalent of 2-3m² in additional useable area
- Rotating wingmast
- Self-tacking jib
- No backstays needed
- Very fast – especially in light conditions
- Easy to transport – 850kg all up
- Planing above 8kt windspeed
- Complete boat sells at 40,000 euros
- Very elegant
- Swiss made!

Strategy

To reinvigorate a broadly based amateur scene in one-design racing, which means launching as many boats as possible on Lake Zurich in the first year and preparing the steps for other venues (Lake Lucerne and Lake Geneva), organising launches with local partners, clubs, suppliers and representatives. We will also try to help new groups find sponsors. By the end of the 2006 season there will be at least 10 boats on Lake Zurich. This may appear modest, but in the greater picture it is a major step forward. *More information: www.onyx-yachting.ch* □



This may become known as the 'democracy edition' of *Seahorse*: first the web-driven Flying Tiger (page 45), now the Onyx 28, which has been created by and initially for a small and knowledgeable group of Swiss sailors



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