

Fancy a thrill-fix?

Fast, frisky and fun, the new 10.7m Dehler 34 is the racing-oriented cruiser's dream package.

If the use of the word 'new' in my introduction has confused you, let me explain.

Yes, Dehler has had a 34 for many years. The vessel was introduced in the mid-80s and became an instant hit. Around 1,500 were built and, in fact, the model is widely credited with having forged the German manufacturer's reputation for high-performance cruisers.

But this is the 'new' 34 – and she's a radically different animal. She joins a growing list of restyled Dehler models manufactured after Hanse's takeover of the company a few years ago. Among other changes, the switch introduced the legendary Judel/Vrolijk design team to the revamped Dehler line-up.

While the two boats share roughly the same LOA, the new 34 is a major departure from its ancestor. Decades of boatbuilding innovation and advances are obvious – not only in terms of design, materials and construction, but also in the tricky matter of successfully marrying performance with cruising comfort.

Looking for clues of the original design in the new 34's interior space and layout is a futile exercise – they may as well be different boats. The early 34s had narrow hulls and living areas that could be described as cramped, basic – even utilitarian.

The younger sibling enjoys far more volume thanks to a slightly wider beam – and crucially, a beam that's carried a long way aft. And the designers have used that volume well. She's supremely comfortable, even luxurious, and for a 34-footer, the sense of space is pretty damn impressive.

At the other end of the equation, the boat's go-fast attributes are everywhere. A low profile and the clean lines are accentuated by numerous drag-minimising features. Pop-up cleats, sheets running under the coach-roof, flush hatches, a below-deck windlass – and a streamlined bowsprit for the gennaker.

In addition, the new hull's equipped with a plumb bow – it adds around 1.3m to the original 34's

waterline length. It's now 9.6m, about a metre shy of the yacht's overall 10.7m length. And consider the yacht's underwater appendages.

Thanks to Hanse's production line efficiency and flexibility, Dehler buyers are offered a smorgasbord of performance-boosting options. Standard 34s come with a 1.95m keel – or a 1.55m shoal draught version if you like anchoring closer to shore. But there's also a third option – fitted to this boat – a 2.1m keel with a T-bulb. She's also equipped with a deeper rudder to handle the extra horsepower.

EXTRA HORSEPOWER?

If the standard Selden alloy rig's too tame for you, there's a taller version that boosts the working sail area from 65m² to 71m². I didn't meet the owner of





review

Dehler 34

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AND **SUPPLIED**

STIFFER & STRONGER

Racing skippers often do wild, irrational things in the heat of battle – and while the crew will roll their eyes and grin and bear it, it's not as easy for the boat.

To guard against any unbridled excitement, Dehler has bonded a carbon-fibre 'cage' to the hull to spread the rig's load more evenly.



this 34, but I'm guessing he's something of an adrenalin junkie. Scorning both the standard rig and its taller alternative, he's opted for the full carbon-fibre version – and it comes with rod rigging.

Of course, to take full advantage of it, you'll need appropriate sails. On our review day the boat was still wearing her factory-supplied Elvstrom sails, but these are soon to be replaced by a set of 3Di upgrades from North Sails.

All up, this has the makings of a seriously-hot 34 – and given that most buyers are likely to be people whose fingers begin twitching uncontrollably if passed by another boat, Dehler has sensibly prepared the hull to absorb any excessive demands a wild-eyed skipper might ask of it.

The main defence is a carbon-fibre 'cage' moulded into the hull – a grid designed to spread the rig's load more evenly across the hull.

COCKPIT & DECK

To control the rig and optimise performance, the 34's equipped with a well-designed cockpit sporting twin helm stations. Importantly, it's a design that cycles easily





ABOVE A plumb bow has extended the new 34's waterline length by 1.3m.

FAR LEFT Lazy jacks help with dropping the main.

LEFT I like the teak around the base of the mast – it offers a much more secure foothold.

between a racing-crew in hot chilli mode – and a chill-out area for friends and family.

Sail controls are easy thanks to the cockpit being surrounded by six Lewmar 45 winches – two primaries right at the helms, two secondaries a little further forward, and two more on the coachroof, either side of the companionway hatch. In tandem with a battery of Spinlock clutches, these service the multitude of halyards and reefing lines running from the mast's base.

So for sailors who like to tweak, this Dehler is a feast. With the double-ended German mainsheet system, the sail can be adjusted from either helm. There's a full-width traveler built into the cockpit floor, just forward of the helms – and again, the horse's control lines terminate right at the helms.

Jib sheets run through turning blocks well aft and can be fed to either the primaries or secondaries. In family mode, when you may have a disengaged crew, I'd leave the mainsheet

RIGHT Bright, elegant decor and pretty spacious for a 34-footer.

FAR RIGHT The galley's fridge has top and front access. The forepeak has a conventional vee berth, but the aft cabin's bed is much bigger.

on the secondaries and use the primaries for the jib. Much easier for short-handed tweaking.

B&G gear has been installed on nifty platforms at each helm – large, easy-to-read instruments – and they're complemented by wind/speed dials built into the companionway hatch. The wheels are mounted on angled pedestals – so the bases don't intrude into the cockpit – leaving plenty of space in the 'avenue' between the helms. That makes for an easy flow of traffic between cockpit and the large, fold-down boarding platform.

Incidentally, I'm told *really* serious 34 owners remove the fold-down platform for racing, leaving an open transom. It doesn't look particularly heavy, but I guess eliminating every bit of weight is useful in the heat of battle. Removal involves undoing a few bolts. This boat's cockpit table is a permanent fixture – racers can opt for the removable version.



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My lasting impression is the ease with which she accelerates in the puffs.



I only have one quibble about the 34's cockpit/rig. The mast has a single backstay that splits about four metres above the helmsman. The starboard split is fitted with a simple but effective block-and-tackle system for encouraging mast bend, but it's irritatingly close to your head/shoulder – even with my average height. I understand the termination point can be shifted to a pad-eye further outboard, which should help.

BELOW DECKS

As suggested earlier, the measure of a true performance-cruiser is a fast boat that also offers comfortable, spacious accommodation – and this 34 qualifies easily. It's a roomy interior – bright and elegant – perfect for entertaining.

She's designed for four, sleeping in two generous cabins – though you could convert the saloon settees into beds for

another two. Up front is the master cabin with a double bed, and aft, to starboard, a cabin with an even larger double bed, though with less headroom. If it was my boat I'd opt for the rear cabin.

They share a single bathroom, to port, with a separate shower. I like the bathroom's 'two-way' door – a clever piece of design which sees the same door used for the shower. Just forward of the bathroom is a small nav station. Again, it uses clever design features and can be shifted to increase the size of the port settee when the navigator needs some shut-eye. Opposite is a compact but well-equipped, L-shaped galley.

PERFORMANCE

Light winds prevailed on our sail day – but more than enough, thankfully, to reveal the 34's excellent responsiveness. She's a pleasure to sail and, with four of us on



LEFT The nav station at the aft end of the port settee.

BELOW Easy-to-read B&G instruments at each helm, and the primary winches are only an arm-reach away.



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board, there was plenty of opportunity to tweak and fiddle.

My lasting impression is the ease with which she accelerates in the puffs. She's a light boat – around 5.5 tonnes – thanks to the end-grain balsa core construction above the waterline and in the deck. With that tall rig it doesn't take much to get her excited.

The Jefa steering is wonderfully light and the sightlines to the jib tell tales clear from either helm. Tacking is effortless – she spins on the proverbial dime. With a 2.1 tonne bulb hanging off the end of the 2.1m keel she's a stiff, comfortable boat, and jib tracks laid well inboard contribute to her efficient upwind performance.

This 34 has a gennaker – but she's also equipped for a spinnaker. And for that I like the teak laid around the base of the mast. It offers much more secure footing for the crew handling halyards and guy sheets.

The boat won the prestigious 2017 Boat of the Year award in *Cruising World* magazine's Performance Cruiser category. Around 70 of the new 34s have been sold since the model was introduced early last year. It would be a brave call to say sales will eclipse those of her predecessor's – but I wouldn't be surprised.

She's perfect for an owner interested in stepping aboard a ready-to-go competitive racer – and once the adrenalin's subsided, she instantly presents as a comfortable cruiser for hosting friends or family. **BNZ**



Dehler 34

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HIGHLIGHTS

Performance –
a pleasure to sail

Comfortable
accommodation

Sensible
cockpit layout

SPECIFICATIONS

loa 10.70m

lwl 9.60m

beam 3.60m

draft 2.1m – shallower draft
(1.95m or 1.55m) available

displacement 5,450kg

ballast 2,100kg

sail area 71m² (standard 65m²)

engines 27hp Volvo with
saildrive (standard engine is
18hp Volvo)

diesel 160 litres

water 230 litres

WATCH IT

