

review

FarEast 28R

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# FAST FUN





It seems modern yacht design is full of ratios and formulas. Without a doubt the most important of these is the fun/dollar ratio. Despite its importance it's often forgotten – until a boat like the FarEast 28R comes along to remind us of what sailing is all about.



Sailing friends Gary Smith and Graeme Tee had been casting around looking for an affordable inshore racing boat that had the potential for a high fun/dollar ratio and the promise for one-design club racing. They have owned two boats together. A Young 88 (*Panama Jack*) and an Elliot 1050 (*Sniper*) and were looking for

the convenience of more performance-oriented harbour racing design.

“While there are plenty to choose from in this market, none of them had the affordability of the FarEast 28R,” says Gary. At NZ\$89,000 on the water the FarEast was shipped to New Zealand from China in a simple 40-foot container; literally a boat in a box. “She was like a piece of furniture from Ikea, simple to assemble with everything you need ready to sail. We merely had to lower her onto her keel, install the stanchions and lifelines and assemble the mast.”

FarEast has been in the business of producing quality one-design boats since 2002. It is licensed by the International Sailing Federation and is the world's largest producer of Optimists and 420s. Combining this experience with the design genius of Dutch naval architects Simonis-Voogd, it's no wonder the FarEast 28R is taking off as a simple, affordable and fun-filled one-design.

### CONSTRUCTION

As you'd expect with a company that's been manufacturing quality, one-design boats for decades, the standard of manufacturing is excellent. The construction meets the internationally-recognised CE standard and is based on a high-density foam sandwich layup.

The fibreglass resin is pre-weighed and vacuum-infused to create a



**ABOVE** A red gennaker drawing well and a crew bristling with enthusiasm. What more could you want from life?

**OPPOSITE** Mast-mounted instruments deliver the vital stats.

**BELOW** Plenty of room in the cockpit for a cheerful crew.

light, stiff hull that's reinforced with a longitudinal beam and ring frames. The carbon keel fin and rudder are infused in an alloy mould, which gives the hull the strength and stiffness without the associated astronomical price.

Similarly, the rig is carbon-free with an aluminium deck-stepped Selden twin-spreader mast anchored to sturdy stainless chainplates mounted on the gunwale. This makes it tweakable, economical and tough enough to stand windy New Zealand conditions.

#### LAYOUT

One of the great features of sports boats is that they are designed to be sailed. The FarEast 28R keeps with this tradition with her large cockpit space – plenty of room for four or five crew to move across the boat easily during a tack and work the gennaker hoists and drops.

The wide-open transom allows plenty of room for the helmsperson and any crew who have to retreat there in hard downwind conditions. With her 2.7m beam she's in the oversized category for towing, but can conceivably fit onto a trailer for moving between racing regattas.





A Suzuki 6hp four-stroke outboard fits unobtrusively on a bracket on the starboard side and provides more than enough grunt to move the easily-driven hull. Adjacent to the helm position there are the controls for the adjustable backstay, 4:1 adjustable mainsheet traveller and mainsheet fine-tune control. The mainsheet runs a 4:1 tackle and with the extra 4:1 of the fine-tune you have effectively 16:1 of power which helps twist out the top of the mainsail in puffy conditions.

The forward cockpit has a narrower work area with Harken sheet winches either side for trimming the jib and a low cabin structure with large hatchway slightly offset to port from the centre. There is a single Harken winch and a small clutch of spinlock jammers on the starboard side of the cabin and the controls for setting and retrieving the aluminium gennaker pole out of its housing.

On the Selden mast above the cabin is the

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**TOP** Fairly utilitarian down below, but then she is a racer.

**ABOVE** A clean deck lay-out helps with easy sail handling.

**OPPOSITE** Do we *have* to gybe? I'm rather enjoying this.

Velotech readout and an additional Raymarine display. This covers the wireless electronics package which gives speed, wind and, most importantly in Tauranga Harbour, depth within easy view of the helm. The control centre is capped off with a bag that buttons into the hatchway and allows an easy, no-fuss method of launching and retrieving the gennaker. The yacht comes standard with life rails and bow/stern pushpit rails, moulded foot cockpit chocks for both the helmsman and jib trimmers – as well as canvas rope-tidy bags.

Down below, the FarEast 28R is, as you would expect for a racing boat, barer than old Mother Hubbard's cupboard. The bare hull and frames offer ample opportunity for sail storage and a place to keep your gear dry. When I quizzed the co-owner of *Kohara*, Gary, about the luxurious accommodation he laughed and gestured toward the well-appointed launch opposite their marina berth – "That's what friends are for!"

### ON THE WATER

The first impressions of *Kohara* from the dock are of a boat larger than her 28 feet. Her contemporary design and striking vinyl decal look fast even at rest. Stepping aboard the sensation was that of a keeler – just under half her 1,300kg weight is in the bulb, making her surprisingly stiff for a sport boat.

The next impression is of the simple and elegant systems around the boat, which are intuitive to follow and allow the blessing of a clean, functional cockpit. All this was taken in as we manoeuvred out of the marina under the power of the 6hp Suzuki.

Tauranga Harbour turned on a nice southwesterly for our sail. We had the luxury of between 5 and 15 knots of wind and an incoming tide that provided a great combination of flat water and consistent breeze. Helming for the up-harbour beat was a pleasure as the control of the powerful fat-head mainsail was easy with the backstay, traveller and tweeker all within easy reach.

On the wind, *Kohara* seemed to sit in the high sixes most of the time and creeping up to seven knots on occasion. The tweeker was played to twist the head in the gusts but the stiffness of the boat helped her stay on her feet and the helm remained light.

Downwind, the efficient layout of the cockpit came into its own.



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 to sit in the  
 high sixes most  
 of the time...



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### HIGHLIGHTS

Simplicity –  
a boat in a box,  
ready to go

Spacious cockpit  
for a 28-footer

Exhilarating  
sailing

### SPECIFICATIONS

loa 9.07m  
hull length 8.55m  
beam 2.75m  
draft 1.73m  
displacement 1,360kg  
ballast 600kg  
mainsail area 25m<sup>2</sup>  
jib area 19m<sup>2</sup>  
gennaker 80m<sup>2</sup>  
auxiliary 3.5-6hp outboard  
construction Fibreglass/foam core

### WATCH IT



There is plenty of room to work the gennaker hoist and after a time a system can be worked out that means four crew is enough to get to all the jobs. With 80m<sup>2</sup> of masthead gennaker at the end of the retractable prod, the boat accelerates easily, reaching wind speed and peaking at 13.8knots in the heaviest gust.

The wide stern is quick to plane and the deep rudder has a sure-footed feel at the helm. As with most sports boats keeping the boat under the rig by playing the sheets paid big dividends in terms of speed.

Immediately below the speed readout is the depth and it is well to keep an eye on that one around this neck of the woods. With Gary and Graeme's local knowledge we were able to avoid the worst of the sandbanks. With a 1.73m draft, *Kohara* is still within the realms of handling shallow water venues and that gives her a distinct advantage over the competition in this market.

The final test for *Kohara* was when our cameraman Geoff came aboard to get some closeup action. The commodious cockpit easily absorbed the extra bod and the ability to conduct an interview while charging down the harbour under gennaker said volumes for the user-friendly nature of this boat.

When I asked Gary the meaning of the name *Kohara* he said: "Enthusiastic or to be passionate or infatuated." These words were stated through one of those perma-grins you get from a fun afternoon boosting around the harbour with your mates.

While the designers at Simonis-Voogd spent days getting the critical ratios of ballast displacement right for the FarEast 28R, it is the fun/dollar ratio that is the clincher here. The formula of simple, affordable and perma-grininducing one-design set to change the market for inshore racing keelboats in this country. **BNZ**