



# Contest 37

*Rationalisation rather than innovation has characterised the progress of Dutch builders Conyplex. Matthew Sheahan reports on their latest design*

**T**he first Contest 37 to arrive in the UK was finished in an elegant dark blue with a cream trim stripe (the company's more usual colour scheme is white hull and topsides and a dark blue trim below the gunwale), but, beneath this thin veil, she was every bit a Contest as we were to find out during her first UK trials.

Evolution has been the key to the Dutch company Conyplex's success, and they are justifiably proud of the reputation they have achieved in their 35-year history. A distinct company image is what they have always sought throughout their 35 to 58ft range.

The new 37 continues this theme, replacing two successful previous boats, the aft cockpit 36 and the centre cockpit 38.

## ON DECK

Simplicity is the key to the 37's deck layout. She has a small, deep and secure aft cockpit with her wheel mounted aftermost. Slatted teak seating surrounds the helming position. Deep cockpit coamings also provide ample protection and a backrest at a comfortable height.

A pair of Lewmar 48ST primaries are mounted on the coamings close to the helmsman, which makes freeing the headsail easy. Unfortunately, on the boat we sailed, the winches were mounted too far aft; when it came to sheeting in, the handle had to pass between the guardwires.

The winches were difficult to reach if you were forward of the wheel. They also felt a

touch underpowered for the large overlapping headsail, but this could have been more to do with awkward positioning.

The mainsheet and traveller controls, on the other hand, were easy to reach, for both helmsman and crew. Mounted on the outboard end of the boom – thus providing a good purchase – and leading down to a track mounted just forward of the steering pedestal, the arrangement made sailing a pleasure.

It was especially noticeable upwind as the helmsman could sit to weather, feet braced comfortably either side of the wheel, and trim the main with one hand. Result: total control and enjoyable to steer.

Because our boat had a fully furling rig there were precious few other control lines to worry about, but those that were required were led along the coachroof top, through the windscreen support moulding and back to a pair of Lewmar 40STs.

Bulwarks 65mm deep surround the entire deck, which is teak-clad as standard, apart from the coachroof top which is an option. This gives a secure and solid feel wherever you are on deck – apart from the sloping part of the coachroof. We would have preferred to see a non-slip finish here as standard: the large expanse of white glassfibre presents a very slippery surface.

# On test



All photos: Malcolm White

Apart from these two niggles, the Contest 37 is hard to fault on deck, especially when you get to the cavernous cockpit stowage.

## RIG AND SAILS

The same can be said of her rig. Well proportioned, sensibly thought out and easy to handle, her sail plan is typical of the configuration



**Above, the high cockpit coamings are wide enough to provide comfortable seating and good visibility downwind. Left, upwind under full sail in 14-18 knots**

favoured by Conyplex for many of their cruising designs.

The masthead rig has two sets of in-line spreaders and 1x19 wire rigging, and there are twin fore and aft lowers providing ample support. Her standard spars are by Selden. The Furllex headsail unit is an extra. The in-mast furling system is also extra and together they add around £8,700 to the basic price, including both sails.

Little more can be said about her sail plan, which in itself is a compliment. Easy to trim and to reef, she should present no handling problem for a sailing couple.

**Upwind or downwind, the Contest 37's cockpit is comfortable, secure and manageable**

## ACCOMMODATION

Below decks she is classic Conyplex, with solid teak joiner work dominating the saloon. There is nothing startling here: she has a conventional double vee-berth cabin forward, navigation station and galley amidships with a double cabin aft. And yet, as you move about the interior, you realise that there have been several subtle changes.

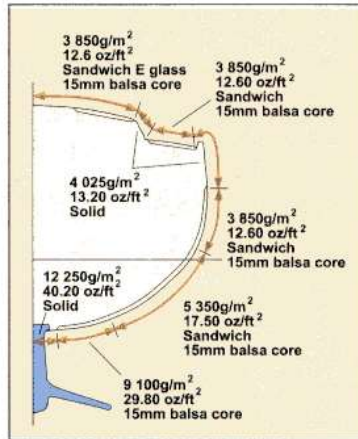
Perhaps the most obvious is the head arrangement, positioned between the saloon and the forward cabin. There is nothing particularly new about siting the head between two transverse bulkheads and having doors through each one. This is, after all, the simplest and most logical means of providing access from each side without disturbing the other.

But it is the layout and proportions which make this cabin so practical. To starboard, the normal head fittings, including a sink and shower unit, are provided. To port, a large hanging locker and shelves are precisely where you want them, allowing the head compartment to be used as a dressing room as well.

In the saloon, the distinctive teak covers for the chainplate deck ties and the portholes ▽

# Technical data

## CONTEST 37



**Designed by:** Dick Zaal  
**Built by:** Conyplex BV, Overleek 3,  
 1671 GD Medemblik, Netherlands.  
**Marketed in UK by:** Charles Watson  
 Marine, 3 The Square, Hamble, Hants  
 SO3 5LS. Tel: (01703) 456505. Fax:  
 457773.

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Prismatic coefficient</b> | N/A           |
| <b>Immersion</b>             | N/A           |
| <b>Ballast ratio</b>         | 32.6          |
| <b>Personal stowage</b>      | 10.81per cent |

**Stowage factor:** 3ft<sup>3</sup> per person for stowage of personal effects. Factor is shown as a percentage of total volume.

**Pounds/inch (kg/cm) immersion:** How much weight it takes to sink the boat parallel to DWL.

**Prismatic coefficient:** The ratio of volume to displacement to a volume of LWL and the maximum cross sectional area below the load waterplane. An indication of fineness or fullness of the hull.

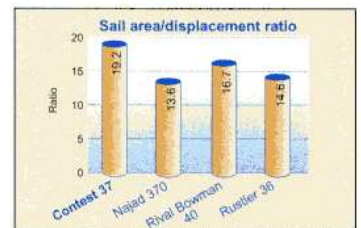
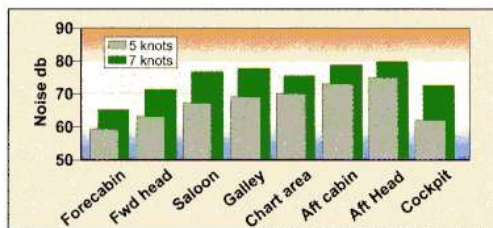
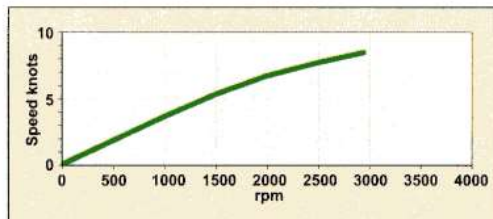
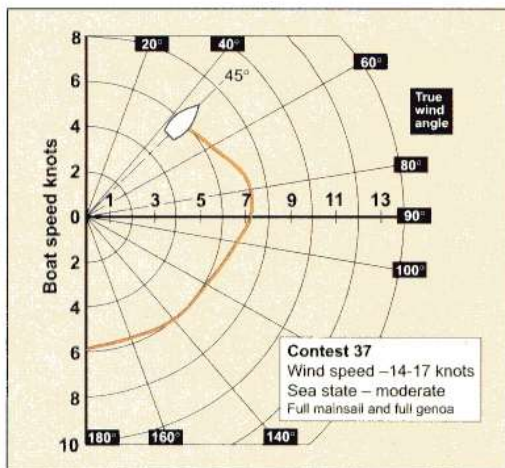
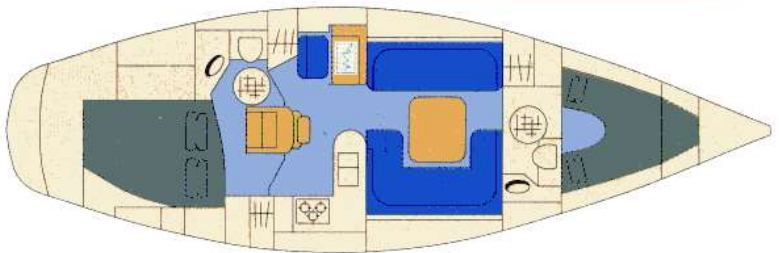
**Polar diagram:** Shows the optimum close-hauled angle to the true wind. Also shows speed attained on all courses. Important – consider in conjunction with the true wind speed during the test.

**Sail area: displacement ratio:** This ratio gives some indication of power available. Higher numbers = greater performance.

$$\frac{SA(ft^2)}{(\text{Displacement (lb)} \div 64)^{0.66}}$$

**Ballast ratio:** A comparison between displacement and the weight of the ballast.

**Displacement:waterline length:** Performance indicator. Low numbers = higher performance.  $(\text{Displacement (lb)} \div 2240) \div (0.01 \times \text{LWL (ft)})^3$



### COMPARABLE BOATS

|                       | CONTEST 37          |                    | NAJAD 370           |                    | RIVAL BOWMAN 40     |                    | RUSTLER 36          |                    |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <b>LOA</b>            | 11.25m              | 36ft 11in          | 11.25m              | 36ft 11in          | 12.17m              | 39ft 11in          | 10.77m              | 35ft 4in           |
| <b>LWL</b>            | 10.01m              | 32ft 10in          | 9.25m               | 30ft 4in           | 9.75m               | 32ft 0in           | 8.23m               | 27ft 0in           |
| <b>Beam</b>           | 3.61m               | 11ft 10in          | 3.63m               | 11ft 11in          | 3.84m               | 12ft 7in           | 3.35m               | 11ft 0in           |
| <b>Draught</b>        | 1.50m               | 4ft 11in           | 1.80m               | 5ft 11in           | 1.50m               | 4ft 11in           | 1.68m               | 5ft 6in            |
| <b>Displacement</b>   | 8,900kg             | 19,621lb           | 9,698kg             | 21,380lb           | 8,618kg             | 19,000lb           | 7,623kg             | 16,805lb           |
| <b>Ballast</b>        | 2,900kg             | 6,393lb            | 4,000kg             | 8,818lb            | 3,225kg             | 7,110lb            | 3,456kg             | 7,620lb            |
| <b>Sail area</b>      | 81.39m <sup>2</sup> | 875ft <sup>2</sup> | 61.01m <sup>2</sup> | 656ft <sup>2</sup> | 69.10m <sup>2</sup> | 743ft <sup>2</sup> | 55.80m <sup>2</sup> | 600ft <sup>2</sup> |
| <b>Berths</b>         | 4                   |                    | 6                   |                    | 4                   |                    | 4-6                 |                    |
| <b>Engine</b>         | Volvo MD22L         |                    | Volvo MD22L         |                    | Volvo MD22L         |                    | Yanmar 3GM          |                    |
|                       | 37kW                | 50hp               | 36kW                | 48hp               | 37kW                | 50hp               | 20kW                | 27hp               |
| <b>Water</b>          | 250lt               | 55gal              | 400lt               | 88gal              | 382lt               | 84gal              | 250lt               | 55gal              |
| <b>Fuel</b>           | 150lt               | 33gal              | 300lt               | 66gal              | 318lt               | 70gal              | 182lt               | 40gal              |
| <b>Sail area:disp</b> | 19.2                |                    | 13.6                |                    | 16.7                |                    | 14.6                |                    |
| <b>Disp:LWL</b>       | 247                 |                    | 342                 |                    | 259                 |                    | 381                 |                    |
| <b>Price (ex VAT)</b> | £122,000            |                    | £146,769            |                    | £176,787            |                    | £85,500             |                    |

# On test

The distinctive teak covers for the chainplate deck ties and the portholes just below the gunwale are a hallmark of this range. However, small details such as rounded edges add a new style to the accommodation

almost take this for granted, accepting the compromise of a shallow-draught keel over a deeper fin version.

But the 37 almost brings the criticism upon herself as she is such a pleasant boat to sail for helmsman and crew; I couldn't help wanting the absolute best from her all the time.

Her direct and solid feel on the helm, through the Whitlock rod steering, keeps the helmsman in touch with her balance. The comfortable cockpit, easy-to-reach mainsheet system and free-running traveller, means that you can trim to each change in the wind without continually moving around. And yet, if you prefer to cleat off the sheets and sail to the breeze, she's quite capable of doing that, too.

She's a deceptive boat when it comes to speed. Typical speeds of between six and eight knots are easily achieved under either sail or power.

With the engine running, she felt smooth and quiet, a factor confirmed by the low noise level recordings. She handles predictably, too, although her marked paddlewheel effect to port meant that flow over the rudder had to be firmly established before we could manoeuvre accurately when going astern.

## CONCLUSIONS

If, on hearing about the new 37, you've been looking forward to a host of exciting new ideas, a new style and a brochure that woos you into submission before you've even seen the price, then you're going to feel let down. Evolution has been one of the main ingredients in Conyplex's success and, as the saying goes: 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it'.

It is easy to imagine that, despite the number of Contests in existence, Conyplex have never built two boats the same. They don't claim this; indeed, their brochure and promotional literature is perhaps a good example of this understated and modest yard.

The simple, folded A3 sheet shows a few basic drawings, some basic dimensions and a single sheet of specifications, all conforming to the same style as the rest of their literature. Simple, but high quality.

The bottom line is, this Dutch yard's main strength is to provide a solidly built, well-mannered boat that forms an excellent basis upon which owners can build their own custom specification.

For this reason the basic price of the boats (the 37 is £122,000 ex VAT), bears little comparison with what many of their customers are prepared to spend on a boat built to last. A clue, perhaps, as to why there are so few on the brokers' lists. □



running just below the gunwale on either side are another hallmark of this range. Comfortable seating for four to six is provided around the folding-leaf table, and the whole dining area is within easy reach of the galley.

Hardly surprising for a boat that is only 11.25m (37ft) long. Yet once again, her well proportioned layout deceived us into thinking she was longer than her quoted figure.

Her after cabin has dual access, despite her being an after cockpit boat, further confirmation of the volume available.

Impressive though this is, we couldn't help thinking that perhaps it was the smallest details that added the final welcoming touches below decks. There seemed to be many curves and well rounded edges in this high-quality accommodation.

## CONSTRUCTION

There is no doubt that she is well built. Poking into every locker and under every floorboard confirmed our earlier impression of a solidly built boat. Build quality is impossible to ignore.

The one-piece hull moulding is a balsa sandwich construction throughout. The only additional moulding is for the skeg and the deadwood for the propeller shaft. Her laminate uses a polyester resin with alternate layers of woven rovings and chopped strand mat. Her deck is also a balsa sandwich construction.

The cast iron keel is bolted on and fits into a recess in the hull moulding. Our test boat was fitted with the wing keel option. Her rudder is a skeg-hung blade with an area forward of the stock providing a small element of balance.

As far as her standard hardware is concerned, she comes fitted with a 40hp Volvo Penta MD 2040 diesel with a 12V/60 amp alternator charging two 108 ah batteries. Tankage is ample at 150lt (33gal) for fuel and 250lt (55gal) for water, both stainless steel tanks.

## UNDER SAIL AND POWER

Fourteen to 18 knots of wind greeted us for our sailing trials in the Solent – hardly punishing conditions, but enough to load her up on the



wind. Under full mainsail and genoa, she sailed comfortably and proficiently on all points of sail, but it was the upwind and reaching work that was most enjoyable.

She's no greyhound, for certain; indeed, at times her wing keel seemed to lose grip when pushed hard in a chop. There appeared to be a noticeable increase in leeway. Getting her back into the groove simply meant bearing off a few degrees, waiting for speed to build and then squeezing back up on course.

I have to admit that this is nit-picking and on many other cruising yachts one would



In the spacious navigation station and galley, the stowage is particularly well organised