

FOCUS ON: ERICSON 26

By Ted Brewer

Bruce King has been the designer for Ericson for more years than I can remember, and King's track record for coming out with quality cruisers and cruiser-racers has been first-rate. The new Ericson 26 is not an exception.

It is not an easy job to design a small family cruiser today, as buyers demand so much in the way of accommodations; in particular, they demand headroom. With the modern, light-displacement hull, there is no way the designer can drop the cabin sole lower, so all he can do in his search for headroom is go up, with higher freeboard and high cabin. This all too often results in a high, boxy appearance. Yet, while the 26



The Ericson 26 is more than adequate below. With careful planning, a couple could cruise in comfort for weeks.

will never be favorably compared in aesthetics to *Ticonderoga*, she looks remarkably good in the water, and longer than her 26 feet.

She should be a threat in club racing as well, particularly the deep-draft version. A high ballast ratio, fairly low displacement/length ratio and generous sail area in a tall $\frac{1}{2}$ rig will add up to a fun family cruiser-racer.

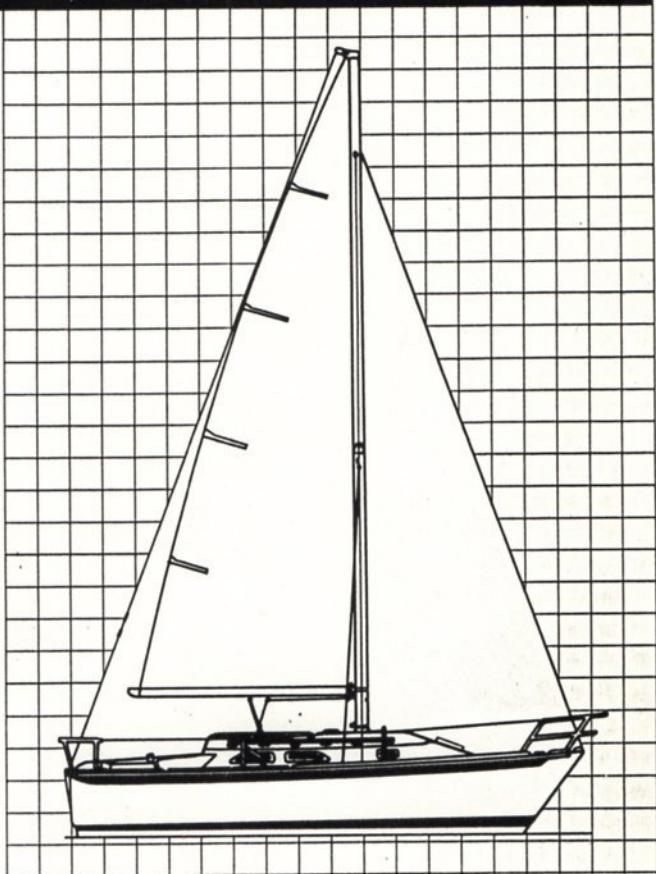
Bruce King is no slouch at designing a fast hull to pop under all these favorable statistics either, so there is no doubt that the 26 will give a good account of herself.

She is not quite as well set up for cruising, though, due to the usual problem of trying to fit a quart into a pint pot. Still, the accommodations are remarkable when you consider what was being offered in boats this size a generation ago. A couple could cruise in comfort for weeks.

On the other hand, the sink is not as large as it should be for convenience, and getting into the ice box could mean leaning over a hot stove. Better get everything the cook needs out of the box before the stove is lit up!

The head is tight as well and, as usual in smaller craft, there is no wet locker. The source of the problem is that buyers have been conditioned (by Madison Avenue?) to demand more and more berths. It seems to be a measure of the designer's skill to cram in as many berths as possible.

The Ericson 26 can sleep six. That's two more than my 30 footer, and I have found we are crowded with four aboard for anything more than a long weekend. With six people fighting to get into the head, the ice box and into everyone's



LOA 25'9" LWL 21'11" Beam 9'3" Draft 4'11" Displacement 5,250 lb. Ballast 2,250 lb. Sail Area 325 sq. ft. Base Price \$29,500

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way in general, I would be a babbling idiot inside of two days. And where would you store all their gear?

It is time that the buyers, the builders and the designers realize that no one in their right mind would go cruising with six people aboard a small boat. Now, if that quarterberth were taken out, the builder could fit a second cockpit locker, a wet locker and, maybe, add a few inches in the head and galley. Then the Ericson 26 would be a little jewel, a diamond.

As it is she is only a ruby, albeit a highly polished one in many ways. She will give her owners a great deal of good sailing and outright fun, and she just might bring home some silverware if all the right strings are pulled and the gods of chance are smiling.



A native of Hamilton, Ontario, Brewer has been a designer of yachts for nearly 30 years. He now resides in Anacortes, WA.