

DESIGN FORUM

Impulse 21

Relaxed Racing at Last

Maybe you grew up racing 470s or Thistles, and you really loved dinghies. But the toils of family and job have taken you away from the planing hull scene in favor of crewing on friends' "bigger boats." Now you're ready for your own boat, and doublehanded and triplehanded are calling you back. Perhaps a Soling? Can your back take it? A 505? Might your heart give out?

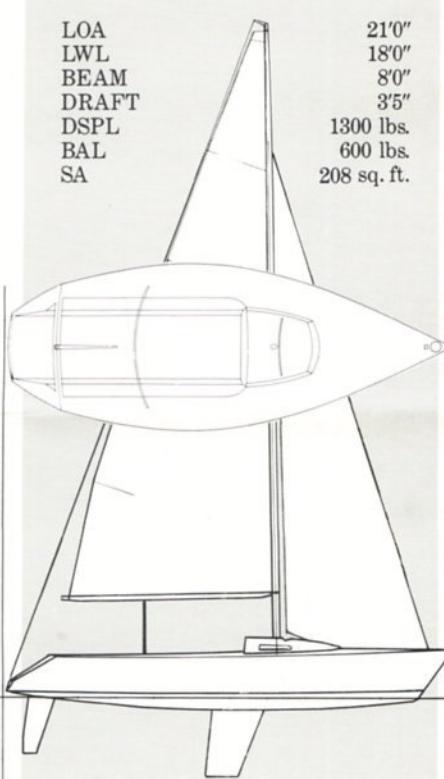
Here's a new happy medium between high performance and general sailability—a 21-footer from Impulse. First they came out with a high-tech, Bill Cook-designed 26-footer that got high marks as a sport boat. Now they have another Bill Cook design with less emphasis on the physical, and more on the practical. The new design can be sailed by two or three people without putting a strain on anyone. The non-overlapping jib is self-tacking, on a Harken traveler track mounted on a lip that doubles as a spray deflector. The jib tacks so easily that an adequately directed beginner could manage the front end of the boat. Virtually all control lines are led under the deck to a center-mounted panel sporting a sharp-looking battery of Harken controls. The deck is extremely simple and clean; no spaghetti here. The spinnaker is launched from a below-deck tube, "Fireball style."

The fractional deck-stepped rig, sup-

ported by a belowdeck strut, is plenty powerful, as it carries 208 square feet of sail—in the same ball park as the J-22 (230 sq. ft.), and Holder 20 (198 sq. ft.). She is also lighter than the J and Holder. On the other hand, she does not have any pocket-cruising aspirations. She is strictly a daysailer, with only enough room in the cuddy for a cooler and a lot of gear.

As a daysailer, the 21 has many dinghy-like attributes. The lack of stanchions on deck and the rolled cockpit lend to the dinghy feel; visually one gets the impression of sailing an overgrown 470, without the trapeze or hiking. The feel is so dinghy-like, the temptation is there to roll-tack. But most dinghy-like is the 21's ability to ramp-launch. Though she draws 3'5", she will slide off a slightly modified trailer with ease. Undinghy-like is the small platform on the stern. It's there for those who want to cool off after a hot light-air race.

Also undinghy-like is the absence of hiking straps in the cockpit. The 600-pound keel takes care of stability for you. With the emphasis taken off the grueling aspects of smallboat racing, the



Impulse 21 is nearly ideal for sailors at either end of the spectrum—both up-and-coming juniors, and those stepping down from larger boats.

—John A. Glynn

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George Middleton photo



A trunk-like control pod houses most of the sailtrim functions, and the stern platform makes life easy for swimmers. The spinnaker controls mount next to the mast, and the chute comes out of a bow tube.

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