

The San Juan 24

A fast Quarter-Tonner that can still compete in PHRF, but numerous problems with construction quality would steer us elsewhere

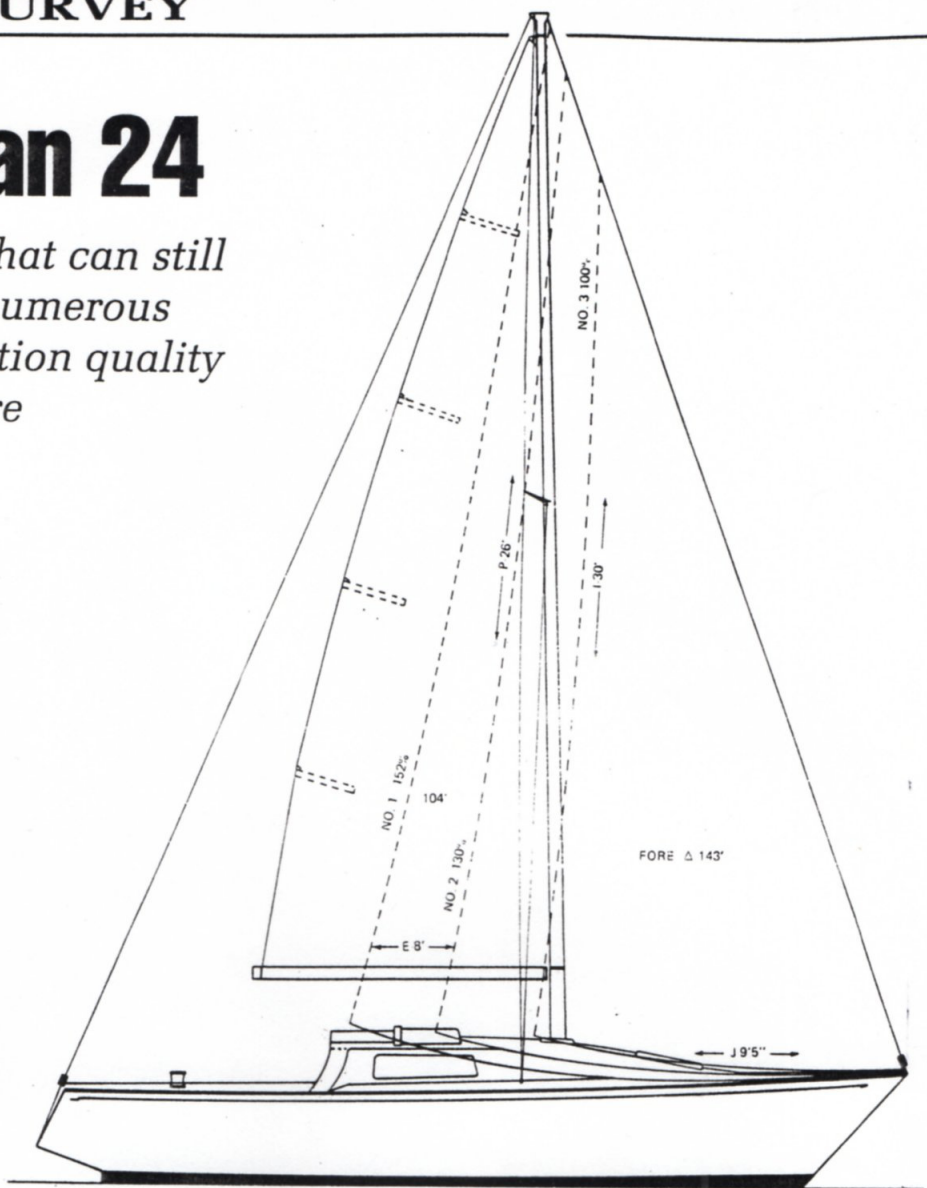
In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Clark Boat Co. jumped on the trailer sailer bandwagon, and became a successful player in this decade-long market. Earlier, Bob and Carol Clark built Lightnings and Thistles, and later, with the business in the hands of their son Don, the company built boats as large as 34 feet. The last boats came out of the shop in 1986, the year the company went out of business.

While the San Juan 21 trailer sailer really established the Clark Boat Co., it was the more performance-oriented boats such as the San Juan 24 and 7.7 that gave it the reputation of a successful builder of faster, under-30-foot boats.

The Design

The San Juan 24 was designed by Canadian Bruce Kirby. Writing in the June 1977 issue of *Boating* magazine, Kirby said his directive from the Clarks was to produce a boat with eight-foot beam (for legal trailering), draw no more than four feet, and rate 18.0 under the IOR (International Offshore Rule) so it could qualify for Quarter Ton events. Because the San Juan 21 had developed a large class association, it also was hoped the 24 could be raced as a one-design. The Mark II version, introduced presumably in 1977, gave the boat a slightly longer waterline and higher (or more honest) displacement, as well as a few other minor changes.

Kirby wrote that the San Juan 24 was both a good racer and cruiser "...partly because my lack of familiarity with the IOR at the time the boat



was designed (in the fall of 1971) kept me away from attempts at 'over optimization' through use of awkward bumps and hollows, and also steered me clear of the very low ballast ratios

San Juan 24

LOA: 24' 0"

LWL: 19' 6"

Beam: 8' 0"

Draft: 4' 0"

Sail area: 231 sq. ft.

Ballast: 1,600 lbs.

Displacement: 3,900 lbs.

designers are using today to achieve minimum CGF (Center of Gravity Factor) under the IOR."

He also noted his initial regret that he had to limit beam to eight feet

(more beam would have allowed adding to sailing length), but said it turned out to be a good decision as the boat was enjoying good success. In hindsight, we wonder how many people want to trailer a 3,500-pound boat with a fixed, four-foot keel. Trailering boats has gone the way of the V-8 automobile engine. Sure, a percentage of racers are willing to make the investment in an expensive tow vehicle and trailer in order to compete in regattas around the country, but for most people, it's simply too much hassle.

Boats designed to the IOR were fated to near extinction as racers became more and more disenchanted with the funny bumps and how quickly a design became obsolete. The astounding success of the J/24 was due in part to the movement away from

the IOR and toward one-design and PHRF (Performance Handicap Rating Formula) racing. In fact, it's interesting to compare the specifications of the San Juan 24 and J/24. Rod Johnstone wasn't too worried about legal trailering limits when he gave the J/24 8' 11" of beam (people seem to trailer them home and to regattas anyway). Its waterline is longer and displacement, at 3,000 pounds, is significantly less. It is not surprising that the J/24 also is a faster boat; its PHRF rating of between 168 and 174 is quite a bit lower than the San Juan 24's 210 to 216 rating.

Nevertheless, the San Juan 24 is a quick, responsive boat owing to its sharp entry, minimum wetted surface, shallow skeg and large rudder. Most owners say it handles sweetly. Still, the boat is not without its performance and construction problems.

Performance

The most common complaint from readers completing our Boat Owner's Questionnaire is less-than-expected downwind performance. "Doesn't surf well," said one owner. "Unstable offwind with spinnaker," said another. "Must take caution with chute between 150 and 180 degrees," said a third. "She likes to roll."

Upwind is another story, with most owners agreeing that the San Juan 24's performance above a beam reach is above average. Many also noted that it

Below: The San Juan 24 sleeps four including the convertible dinette. The location of the toilet and lack of a full bulkhead is considered a drawback by many owners.

Owner's Comments

"Had to repair delaminations in the cockpit, deck, cabin roof and main bulkhead. Pulpit fittings are weak. Had blisters on hull. Got it recoated with epoxy."

1974 model in Wyncote, Pennsylvania

"The San Juan 24 is a great little boat, well built and sails well in all conditions. The IOR design is a problem when racing in MORC. Although my PHRF rating seems to be correct and fair, we are able to compete with all other boats of similar rating and size."

1973 model in St. Clair, Michigan

"It is tender up to 20 degrees, then very stiff. Excellent boat for light air areas. Good teaching boat. Sensitive to sail trim. Okay for short cruising. Excellent PHRF racer."

1974 model in Sheboygan, Wisconsin

"It is basically a strong design, but needs major work to make it a competitive racer. It is fair for coastal cruising for one to three people. Cockpit drain and companionway design are not safe."

1980 model in Phoenix, Arizona

"In heavy air, boat performance falls off. Boat rolls going downwind."

1976 model in Dallas, Texas

performs well in light air.

The boat is for the most part well-balanced. "Very little weather helm; only a light touch on the tiller is required to maintain course," wrote one owner. "It's like having power steering," wrote another. On downwind headings, owner ratings are lower.

As might be expected of a relatively small fin keel racer, where crew weight on the rail is assumed, the boat's initial stability is poor. "Single-handing in high winds does not work well," wrote an owner in Texas. "Tippy for size and weight; good ultimate stability," said a Nashville, Tennessee owner.

Most San Juan 24s use outboard

engines for auxiliary power. Most owners use between six and 7.5 horsepower, which they say will push the boat at hull speed. A few boats were delivered with Atomic 4 inboards, but owners say the boat is too small for it. Bruce Kirby agrees.

Overall, the San Juan 24 performs very well, so long as you understand you're buying an ex-IOR racer and not a cruising boat, despite what the old ads say about dual-purpose. Owners emphasize that the boat is not well suited to short-handed sailing, nor cruising in rough water and high winds. But then, neither is a J/24. If you get your kicks in PHRF racing, the San Juan 24 might be an economical boat to sail competitively.

Construction

Owners are quick to point out the boat's strengths and weaknesses in construction and materials. Most agree that the basic structure is strong. The solid fiberglass hull is about 7/16-inch thick on the bottom, and about 3/16-inch thick at the rail. Fabrics used are 1-1/2-ounce chopped strand and 22-ounce woven roving. The balsa-

