



FAST PROGRESS

A technical, short-handed race boat from a big production builder? The new Sun Fast 3300 is a bold move by Jeanneau and far more radical than its successful 3200 and 3600.

RUPERT HOLMES took it for a spin



Above and left
Square top main
and runners with
a 32:1 purchase

CONCEPT 9/10

★★★★★★★

The new boat has what looks like very bluff forward sections, but a narrow waterline beam minimises drag when upright. When the boat heels, perhaps surprisingly, waterline beam stays fairly constant, but the centre of buoyancy moves rapidly outboard with heel, massively increasing form stability.

It's impressive that the immersed shape stays very balanced when the boat is heeled and there's not a great deal of wetted surface area at any angle of heel. The forward sections are also shaped such that slamming is largely avoided when the boat is heeled.

More unusual are the concave areas ahead of and behind the keel. The concavity in the bow means there's not much buoyancy forward, and therefore less wetted surface area than might be expected. The concavity aft is needed to balance the fluid dynamics and helps to push the stern wave further aft. This makes it easy to get on the plane, or to start surfing and then stay on top of a wave for longer. →

The past few years have seen a number of interesting and innovative smaller IRC raceboats launched, but nothing as radical as the 3300, coming from a company the size of Jeanneau, which has to be sure of selling large numbers to recover up-front development costs. Daniel Andrieu teamed up with Guillaume Verdier – a man whose successful Vendée Globe and America's Cup designs are legendary, but who had not previously been deeply involved

in an IRC boat – to produce an eye-catching model with novel features.

There's an air of revolution about this boat, while it's also more complex than the Sun Fast 3200, which was first launched in 2008. Much of this is down to Jeanneau recognising that shorthanded crews – even amateurs racing solo – have more knowledge than in the past and can therefore happily handle a more complex boat. Although the 3300 is clearly more optimised for short-handed sailing than the 3200 and 3600, the deck layout still gives a very viable option for racing fully crewed.

“ Deck layout represents a big step forward compared with the 3200 ”

There's a notable tumblehome on the topsides, especially forward, which reduces windage and weight, resulting in a lower centre of gravity. The shape, along with a very marginal reverse sheer, also improves hull stiffness. The transom has a double-chine shape, which helps to provide an effective end plate at the top of the rudders, improving their efficiency.

DECK AND RIG 9/10
★★★★★★

While familiar in many aspects, the deck layout also represents a big step forward compared with the 3200. It's more efficient, but also demands a higher level of skill from sailors.

The rig and keel are both relatively far back in the boat. To keep a balanced helm, the boat has a square top mainsail to provide additional area well aft. That means running backstays are needed, although the spreaders have enough sweep to be able to gybe in more than 20 knots of breeze without the runners. In addition, the mainsail clears the backstays once the second reef is in. The backstays have both coarse and fine-tune controls, the latter with a 32:1 purchase, so there's no need to winch them in.

It would also be easy to be sceptical about the headstay foil on a boat for



Above
Cockpit will suit short-handed and fully crewed situations but is unprotected

Below left
Bomby and Diamond sailed the brand new boat to second in class in the Fastnet

Below right
Headstay foil is unusual for a short-handed boat

short-handed racing. With the exception of the Figaro fleets, hank-on sails or furling jibs are almost universal in this field. However, all that's required is a different procedure – a tack change – which then makes it no more difficult. Indeed, it's easier to flake the old sail as it comes down inside the new jib. The downside is that occasionally means you have to tack to change headsails, but even that can be faster than a bare headed change with a hanked sail.

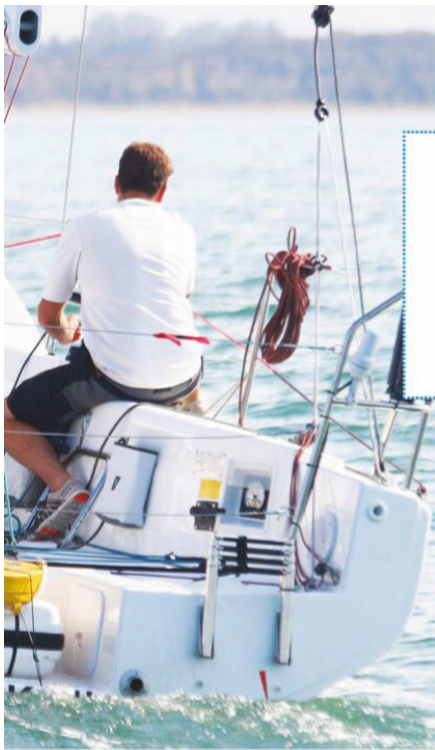
In a similar vein, the mainsail has a bolt rope instead of the more usual slides that are specified for short-handed boats. Instead of hooking onto old-style rams horns, the reefs are secured at the luff with a simple Dyneema

loop and dog bone. Meanwhile the narrow, forward part of the coachroof allows for tight sheeting angles while retaining a low-clew sail. There are two masthead spinnaker halyards, one of which can be used as a fractional simply by pulling in an eye on a line led from the mast base through the fractional sheave and terminating in a low-friction ring, through which one of the masthead halyards runs.

My biggest criticism for an offshore design is the absence of any kind of shelter on deck. The 3300 is by no means alone in this respect among IRC-optimised designs of this size – but with even Mini 650s now offering at least vestigial shelter, it is disappointing



yachtsandyachting.co.uk



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 10.11m
Hull length 9.99m
Light displacement 3,499kg
Draught 1.95m
Ballast 1,400kg
Typical IRC rating 1.029
 sea-ventures.com
 jeanneau.co.uk

solo racing. If double handing in a RORC or JOG programme, there's a stronger argument towards symmetric spinnakers. However, the position of the rig, which is well back in the boat, is more suited to asymmetrics, using genoa and spinnaker staysails. At key wind angles these can add around a third of a knot of boat speed.

Colley opted for a complete sail wardrobe from North, including A1.5, A4 and fractional A5 spinnakers, plus a Helix Code 0. As well as a J1 and J2, there's a J3 that reefs to a J4. In addition, the boat has a spinnaker staysail for the VMG legs. The storm jib is set on a torsion furler so that it can be used as a genoa staysail when reaching with the Code 0 or A1.5.

Fastrak's forestay has a load cell supplied by Cyclops Marine – Axxon has specified a maximum forestay tension of two tonnes for the optional carbon rig. The unit communicates with the B&G H5000 system via Bluetooth, allowing for load to be displayed and logged. This in turn means the running backstays don't need to be calibrated.

In conjunction with Charles Darbyshire of Fourth Cape and Henry Bomby, Sea Ventures is developing an electric adjustment system for rudder toe in, which was at beta stage at the time of our test. The final plan is to put buttons aft, where you can see the rudders, and link these to the B&G data system so that settings can be calibrated, logged and replicated.

to find the 3300 lacking in this regard.

Our test boat, Fastrak XII (owned by Nigel Colley – managing director of Swanwick-based Jeanneau dealer Sea Ventures and a very experienced solo racer), is one of the four pre-production prototypes. Options fitted to Fastrak XII include 200 litres of water ballast each side. This costs only two points of IRC rating, making it an obvious choice for a short-handed boat, but it's not necessary if fully crewed.

The water ballast system has no transfer valve between the tanks, so they fill and empty independently, which means crash tacks are not a problem. They take two minutes to fill and production boats will have a timed relay to stop the pump, with a buzzer to remind you to close the scoop.

Colley chose an asymmetric set up as the boat is primarily oriented for



Above
 Test boat had an asymmetric set up and performed well in light airs

Below right
 Water ballast system is simple

Below left
 Floating jib sheet lead

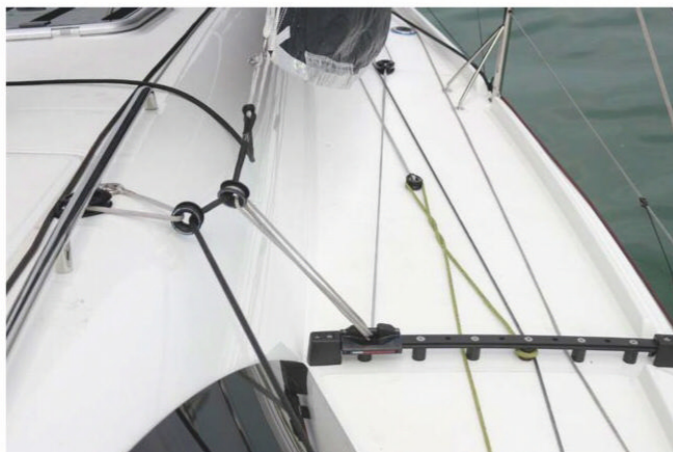
UNDER SAIL 10/10

★★★★★★★★

Our test took place in frustratingly light airs on a glorious late-summer day. However, given this boat will clearly go well in moderate and heavy conditions, thanks to the impressive form stability that translates into additional power and speed, I was interested to see how well it goes in very soft conditions and the extent to which the broad forward sections might impact speed.

Light airs performance is often a particularly important aspect of offshore racing. During a series, or a long race such as the Rolex Fastnet, extended periods are often spent in winds of five knots or less. On hoisting the A1.5 and hotting up to a true wind angle of around 110 degrees, we were off at a respectable speed with very little heel. Although the central part of the transom was just dragging in the water, the boat didn't feel sticky.

By the time we started going to windward the true wind had dipped below 5 knots and was down to 3 at times. It was easy to keep moving, despite the chop created by a multitude



SUN FAST 3300 BOAT TEST



of large motor yachts and shipping. The boat always responded positively to the helm, even when following big wind shifts in the very lightest airs.

The helm position is comfortable, with key sail controls within easy reach and excellent adjustable stainless-steel foot chocks. Equally, manoeuvres can easily be carried out by one person.

What of the boat's potential under IRC? This was perhaps best demonstrated when Henry Bomby and Hannah Diamond sailed Fastrak in the Rolex Fastnet Race this year. Despite being fresh out of the box Fastrak XII was only 15 minutes slower to the rock than the new JPK1030 Leon, which was campaigned by the formidable duo of Jean Pierre Kelbert (M. JPK himself) and Alexis Loison for much of the season.

On the return leg, Leon made good use of a very flat-cut heavy reaching spinnaker, which proved perfect for the conditions and allowed her to pull away. Nevertheless Fastrak maintained speeds of more than 20 knots and finished second overall in both Class 3 and the double-handed division. It is clear that with more time in the boat, the crew could easily have vied closely with Leon for the top spots.

BELOW DECKS 8/10

★★★★★★

The interior arrangement recognises

how we actually use a boat when short-handed offshore, while also offering the convenience of two double aft cabins that have generous berths. There are no interior linings, which is in keeping with this style of boat and the bright white finish, combined with lashings of natural light, means it is bare but still relatively inviting. The big windows are carefully positioned to give a clear view to each side, forward and above to check sail trim.

Excellent big lee cloths are provided for the saloon settees – a much safer arrangement than most. There's plenty of space in the two identical aft cabins, although the water ballast tanks occupy the space that would otherwise be available for hanging lockers. A neat feature is that the outboard half of the aft cabin bunks can be lifted to provide a fairly horizontal and comfortable bed on the windward side of the boat.

The galley is well configured, with a two-burner cooker, ice box, good storage and deep fiddles. In this respect the boat offers a big nod to cruising comfort – it's a far more civilised set-up than the Jetboils typically found on all-out offshore raceboats. The big chart table is configured to be used athwartships or facing forward, and is neatly divided up into several different stowage areas.

Another neat feature is the two seats on each side of the companionway

Above and below Interior offers a nod to cruising comfort, with a basic galley and double cabins; note the seats amidships port and starboard (below left) for catnaps

for taking a quick nap on either tack. The heads is right forward, with space beyond for further sail storage.

VERDICT 10/10

★★★★★★★★

There has been much speculation about this boat since a model showing the radical hull shape was unveiled at the Paris boat show in December last year. In the flesh it's clearly a big step forward in thinking compared with the 3200 – arguably two generations ahead of that design.

The overall result is a very exciting boat that promises to be fast, competitive and a huge amount of fun. It offers already knowledgeable owners – as well as those prepared to invest time in coaching – the potential for hugely rewarding sailing.

Features, equipment and layouts that in the past would have been the preserve of grand prix boats and fitted as customised extras are included as standard, which marks a considerable and welcome step forward by a production builder. This design therefore ups the game for short-handed racing, helping to set new standards and expectations.

Producing a boat that will be this technical to sail could be seen as a brave move by Jeanneau, but this is also a company that knows the market extremely well, in the UK as well as in France. Expect to see plenty of Sun Fast 3300s on the race course, both short-handed and crewed. □

