

OCTOBER 2011

# SuperSailWorld

Supplement to  
YachtingWorld

MONACO YACHTSHOW *mys*

## MONACO YACHT SHOW 2011

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### SHOWCASING

**IMAGINE** latest from Alloy • **FIREFLY** enter the J-slayer • **AKALAM** window on the world  
**RACING THIS IS US** at the Superyacht Cup Palma • Carbon masts built by robot – Southern Spars profile

# SHOWCASE FIREFLY

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# FIREFLY

This 115ft/35m J Class lookalike is designed to beat her bigger, heavyweight sisters in any wind conditions. In benign Palma she proved a match for *Lionheart*, but is her modern underwater design an effective substitute for waterline length? wonders David Glenn

## SHOWCASE FIREFLY

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Above: *Firefly* eases downwind under her distinctive spinnaker. Right: narrow and clean, the deck is designed to work as a raceboat. Note the stylish forehatch

Arguably the most spectacular-looking superyacht to launch this year has been *Firefly*, the André Hoek-designed 115ft /35m J Class lookalike. With two more examples being mooted, the hope is to establish the F Class with a view to populating the growing Spirit of Tradition movement.

The aluminium-hulled, water-ballasted, fixed-keel sloop made her racing debut at the Superyacht Cup Palma in June where she immediately made an impression both stern-to at the dock and on the racecourse.

### Deceptively large

With almost dayboat looks *Firefly* is, in fact, deceptively large and has substantial accommodation with chic minimalist décor and plenty of room for sail packing and stowage. There are pipecotts forward instead of root berths, a small shower stall and galley plus a navigation area – but that's about it. The interior weighs barely two tons. The hull is lined with red cedar battens and the same timber is used in the soles. She might be relatively stripped-out, but what's there is stylish.

On deck nine big powered Harken winch drums surround a wide, shallow working cockpit with the mainsheet control on

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## SHOWCASE FIREFLY



Lightweight, but stylish interior with cedar soles and alloy gratings. Above right: comfortable navigation station and designer companionway

a centreline plinth. A separate steering cockpit is located just abaft the mainsheet track and the aft deck is confined to runner controls with winches abaft the helmsman. It looks efficient and easy to manage.

André Hoek told *Supersail World* that the F Class will allow no change to the hull shape or keel design (the lift version will be compensated for accordingly) or performance parameters such as mast height, boom length or headstay position.

"If people want carbon rigging and a fully fitted interior that's fine," said Hoek, who was hoping that by the end of the year two more F Class clients could be signed up.

### J-slayer

*Firefly* has already been dubbed the J-slayer, the design brief being for a yacht of the smallest size that could beat a J Class on the water in both heavy and light winds. André Hoek and his team have been heavily involved with a number of Js, not least *Lionheart*, based on one of the rejected *Ranger* models from the 1930s, which was also at the Superyacht Cup in Palma.

The two yachts seemed fairly equally matched, but the J was sailing with relatively basic cruising sails and has yet to be optimised in terms of displacement, while *Firefly* was sporting a racing inventory on her Hall Spars carbon rig supported with SMART PBO rigging.

In the third race of the regatta *Firefly* came from behind to beat *Lionheart* convincingly on the water with the wind topping out that day at about 15 knots in the gusts. *Firefly* won two of the three races. I suspect when *Lionheart* is fully optimised she



could be hard to beat, especially in heavier breezes, but both boats have yet to get into their stride. It will be interesting to see if dramatically less displacement – *Firefly* weighs in at a mere 60 tons compared with *Lionheart's* current 178 tons – and a modern underwater shape is a match for a much greater waterline length. *Lionheart* measures 88ft/27m on the waterline, *Firefly* just 73ft/22m.

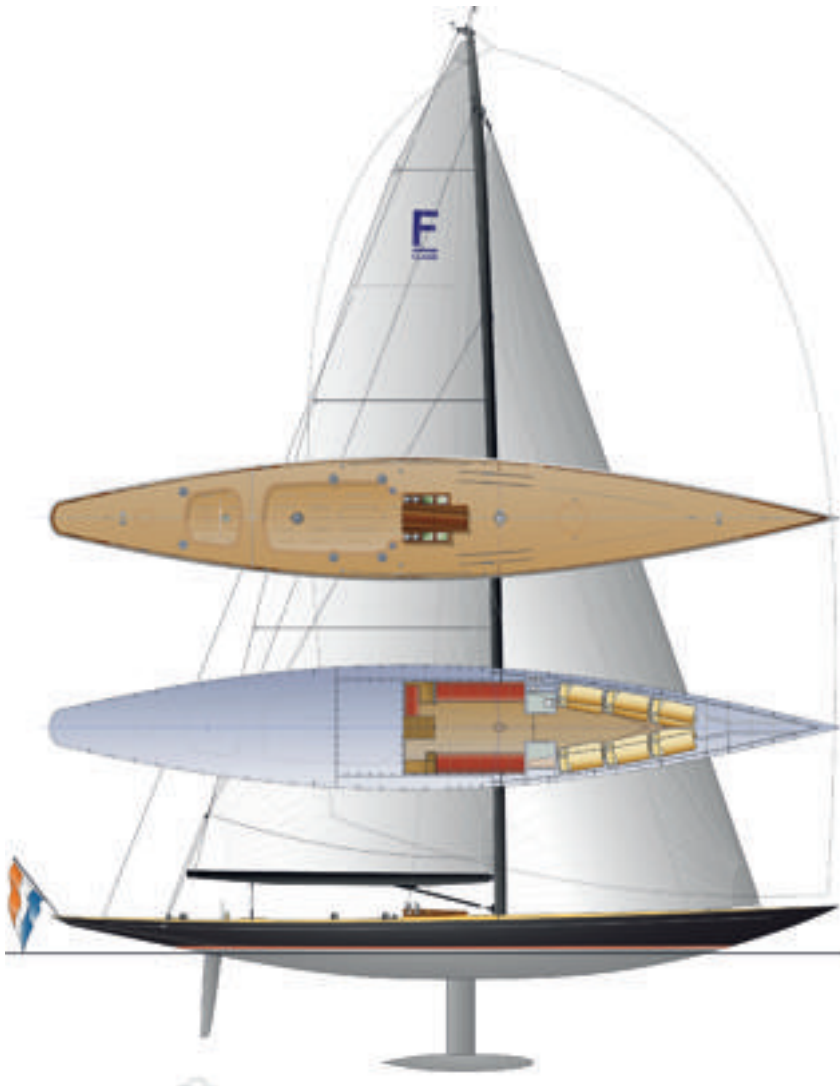
*Firefly* is the result of a long research project, which saw the Hoek team develop 15 different yachts of varying length, beam, displacement, sail area and draught. Interestingly, Hoek says *Firefly's* exterior styling and shape with long overhangs are similar to *Svea*, the Thor Holm J that was never built, but which is one of a number of yachts waiting to emerge as a modern interpretation of the original.

Hoek's office has invested a vast amount of time in the *Svea* project, which has yet to get off the ground, and his research to produce the ideal J Class design should have provided the information he needed for a faster, smaller yacht.

Once Hoek and his client had settled on the design they went to what is quickly becoming the combination of choice in Holland for someone who wants a top aluminium fabricator and a yard which can then finish the yacht to a very high standard. Bloemsma Aluminiumbouw built the hull shell and deck and Claasen Shipyard finished her off. In fact, the latter business, owned by Jan Haart, is now part of Claasen.

While above the waterline *Firefly* is without doubt a spectacular looker, with a distinctive J Class line, below the waterline she is more akin to a modern grand-prix racer with

# SHOWCASE FIREFLY



Above: this rendering shows clearly the T-shaped torpedo keel and unusually deep rudder, providing fingertip steering. Top right: ventilation cowls match the matt black deck fittings

a very high aspect ratio T-style fin and bulb, the latter weighing in at 30 tons. The boat draws 17ft/5.2m and, although *Firefly*'s keel is fixed, the class rules will be designed to accommodate a lifting version too.

All the winch and sailing systems are, of course, powered, making her a relatively simple boat to sail efficiently without having to employ a huge crew. To provide the large amount of hydraulic power there are two generators, one driven by the main Steyr six-cylinder engine and another off a four-cylinder unit.

## Ingenious idea

Both engines are fitted with what is known as an integrated flywheel generator (IFG), which is an electrical generator designed inside the engine's flywheel bell housing. Produced by engine makers Steyr, this ingenious idea does away with the need for space-hungry conventional generator sets. Power from this source will also pump five tonnes of water ballast for use on longer passages. It takes just two minutes to shift from side the side.

So in terms of looks and performance, *Firefly* has certainly begun her career in promising form and by the time this article is published she will have taken part in the Maxi Rolex Regatta in Sardinia and the Régates Royales in Cannes. She will also, possibly, take part in the Voiles de Saint Tropez.

Wherever she turns up, she is bound to turn heads and, with the prospect of more yachts on the horizon, the F Class could be very much one to watch.



## DIMENSIONS

LOA	35.20m	115ft 6in
LWL	22.23m	72ft 11in
Beam	5.58m	18ft 4in
Draught	5.0m	16ft 5in
Displacement	62 tons	
Sail area – upwind	594m <sup>2</sup>	6,394ft <sup>2</sup>
downwind	1095m <sup>2</sup>	11,787ft <sup>2</sup>
Fuel	900lt	198gal
Water tank	800lt	176gal
Spars	Hall Spars	
Engine/generators	Steyr	

