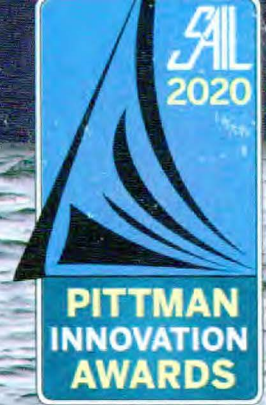


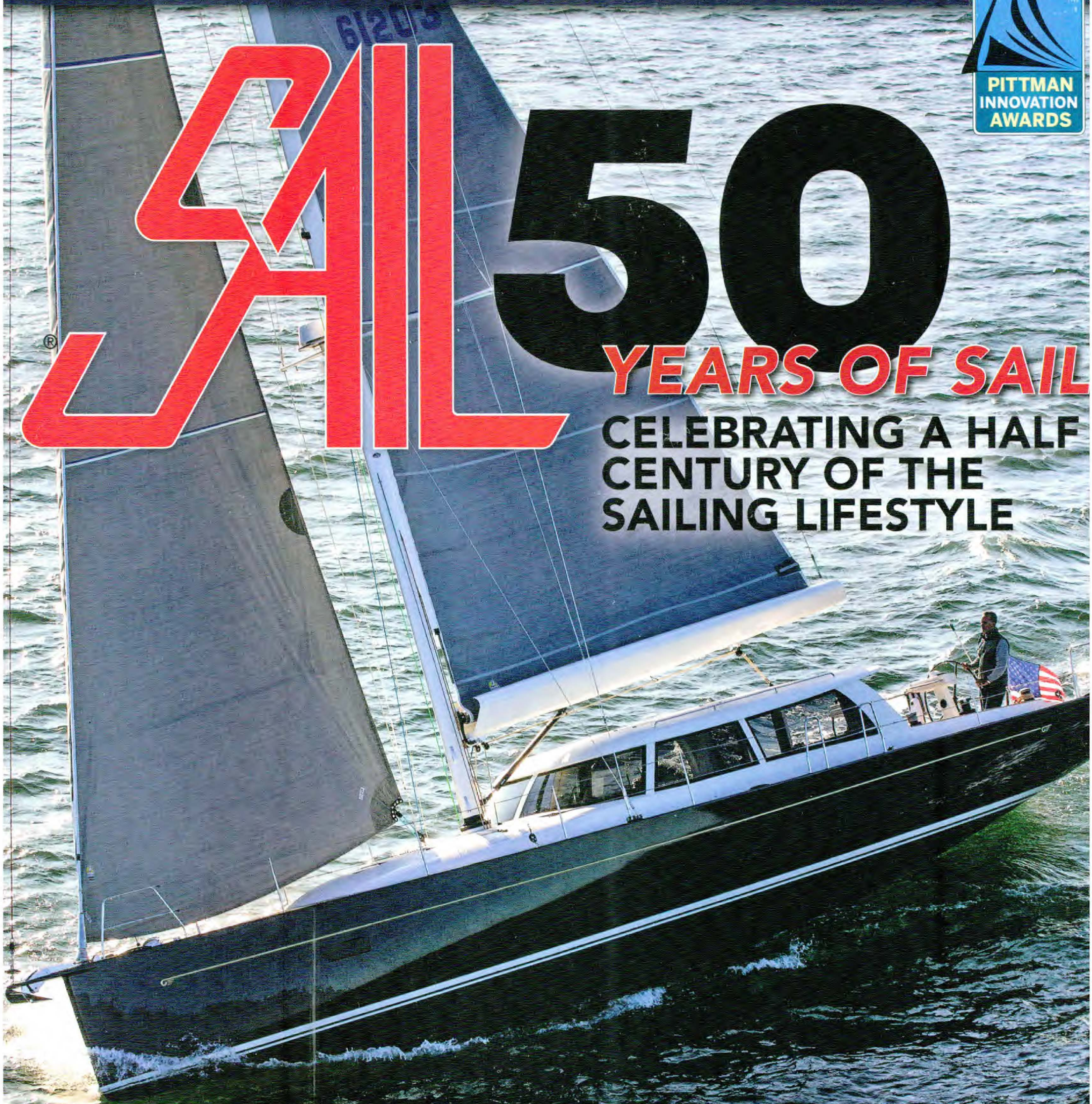
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# Hinckley Sou'wester 53

An elegant new variation on a proven performance hull *By Adam Cort*

**T**he history of sailing is replete with examples of boats being repurposed after their initial launch—think of the famed yacht *America* also doing service as a blockade runner in the Civil War. Rarely, though, has an updated design done half so well as the Hinckley Bermuda 50's transition into the all-new Hinckley Sou'wester 53.

## DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

Designed by Tripp Design Naval Architecture, the Sou'wester 53 is built in carbon and epoxy (infused and then post-cured in the company's "Advanced Composite Center" up in Maine) with a Corecell foam core and an outer layer of Kevlar for puncture resistance.

The basic lines are the same as the 50's, but the hull has been slightly lengthened to gain an additional 3ft of deck space aft of the twin helms, creating more cockpit space. In a testament to the skill of the Tripp office, this extra bit of length not only blends in seamlessly with the rest of the hull, but the substantial overhang and nearly plumb transom nicely complement the boat's nearly plumb bow. Same thing with the boat's not insubstantial pilothouse: the designers not only managed to add it on without ruining the original lines of the Bermuda 50, they succeeded in creating a whole new aesthetic.

Below the waterline, the boat's steel fin and lead bulb draw 8ft 3in.

There is a single, semi-balanced spade rudder, the same as aboard the B50 (though of a different design). Workmanship throughout is outstanding, exactly as you'd expect from the folks at Hinckley.

## ON DECK

Topside, the Sou'wester 53 is all about the cockpit, thanks not only to that extra space aft, but an overhang on the pilothouse that creates some welcome shelter for those lounging on the cockpit benches. These benches (one of which is L-shaped and wraps around a generous cockpit table) are also located a step down from the helm station, making them that much cozier, especially hard on the wind. Even on a brisk fall morning on Narragansett Bay, sitting there in the sunshine felt downright balmy.

Overhead, our test boat carried a keel-stepped, carbon, three-spreader mast built by Offshore Spars and an in-boom mainsail furling system. Shrouds on our test boat were rod, with a hydraulic backstay adjuster. A fixed sprit forward served as both an anchor roller and a tack point for the boat's Code 0, which was controlled using a Facnor FX+4500 continuous-line furler. The boat's self-tacking headsail employed a Seldén Furlex TD belowdeck furler in the interest of maximizing luff length and power—very much befitting this "cruising" boat's racing pedigree.

Harken electric winches, in concert with Spinlock stoppers, tame the boat's halyard and sheets. The main can be easily operated from the twin pedestals,



which on our test boat sported a pair of uber-sexy carbon-fiber Edson wheels. The Harken 50 two-speed secondaries, which could be tended while out of the wind behind the pilothouse, included a discreet line bin for tucking away the spaghetti. A pair of hefty three-speed electrics serves to trim the reaching sails flying from the sprit. Navigation electronics aboard our test boat were all B&G, with a chartplotter at each helm.

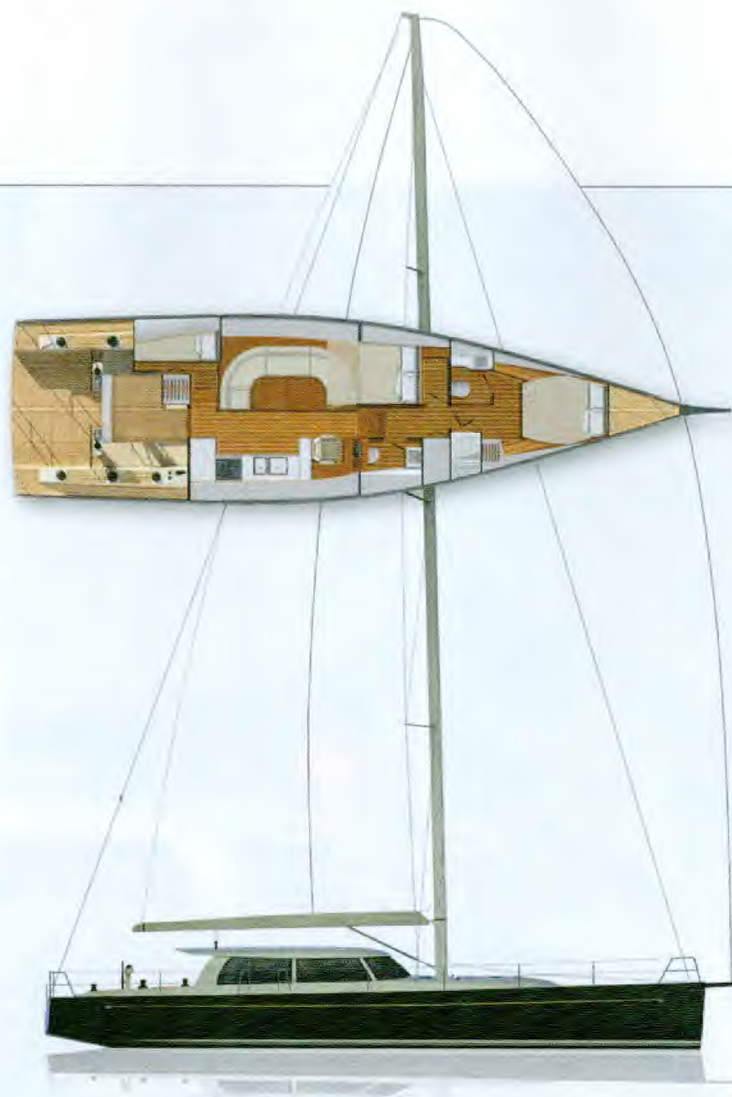
## ACCOMMODATIONS

The interior arrangements aboard the Sou'wester 53 are truly outstanding, both in terms of concept and execution. With respect to the latter, in an effort to speed up the test boat's build schedule, Hinckley enlisted Maine's Brooklin Boatyard to craft the boat's glossy, cherry joinerywork, and the result is nothing less than spectacular. In contrast to those boats aboard which the accommodations feel like a sleekly modern Parisian loft, aboard the Sou'wester 53 there's no mistaking you're on a boat—and a finely crafted one at that.

The key to the 53's accommodation plan is its expansive pilothouse, which contains not only a forward-facing nav station, but an in-line galley to starboard and a U-shaped dining table to port. Thanks to the pilothouse's expansive windows, the entire area is suffused in light, and passengers and crew are all afforded a 360-degree view of the outside world: whether while mixing drinks at the galley, having a snack or standing watch at the nav station.

Forward and down a few steps, the owner's cabin is located in the bow, with separate shower and head compartments to port and starboard. There's also a great little guest cabin (with its own shower and head to starboard) and a third small cabin just aft of the pilothouse. Lockers and drawers are refreshingly deep throughout. The space beneath the cockpit sole is almost entirely devoted to storage as well. Air conditioning is available, and nice details, like top-end stainless steel or chrome-plated brass fittings abound.

The pilothouse is suffused with light; note the outstanding joinerywork



## Hinckley Sou'wester 53

### SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 52ft 4in LWL 46ft 11in  
 BEAM 14ft 3in  
 DRAFT 8ft 3in  
 DISPLACEMENT 30,000lb (light ship)  
 BALLAST 11,465lb  
 SAIL AREA 1,625ft<sup>2</sup>  
 FUEL/WATER (GAL) 100/118  
 ENGINE 75hp Volvo w/saildrive  
 SA/D RATIO 26  
 D/L RATIO 130  
 BALLAST RATIO 38

What do these ratios mean? Visit [sailmagazine.com/ratios](http://sailmagazine.com/ratios)

DESIGNER Tripp Design Naval Architecture  
 BUILDER The Hinckley Company, Portsmouth, RI,  
[thehinckleycompany.com](http://thehinckleycompany.com)  
 PRICE NA

## UNDER SAIL

Motoring out onto Narragansett Bay in a near calm we were fortunate enough to be able to find a catspaw in which to deploy our Doyle Stratis membrane sails. Next thing we knew, we were having the time of our lives chasing whatever bits of breeze we could find between Prudence and Jamestown islands, easily hitting 3.5 knots on a close reach in 5.5 knots of true wind. Another twenty minutes or so after that we found ourselves logging 6.4 knots at a 45-degree apparent wind angle in 7 knots of breeze, eventually hitting 8 knots hard on the wind in flat seas as the wind speed increased to double digits.

Alas, what little wind we had soon faded away. But unfurling the Code 0, we were still able to have fun as we slipped through the chilly water at around 6.5 knots in 8.5 knots of breeze on our way back home. Throughout, the helm felt light, balanced and responsive. I only wish I could have had a chance to see how this boat would do in a rougher seaway. I suspect the results would be equally impressive.

## UNDER POWER

Leaving and entering the tightly packed marina in front of the Hinckley offices in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, was satisfyingly straightforward. Although our test boat was equipped with a retractable bow thruster, we scarcely needed it except for pushing our way off the dock. Underway, the boat's 75hp Volvo (with saildrive and a Gori three-blade folding propeller) moved the boat into a light headwind at 3 knots at 1,000 rpm. Increasing the rpm to 2,000 bumped our SOG up to 6 knots.

## CONCLUSION

Sailors of a certain age will remember a time when the Hinckley yard was synonymous with the very best in sailboat design and construction. Alas, in recent years the company has been focusing almost exclusively on powerboats. However, the Sou'wester 53 clearly shows this storied builder still has what it takes. Here's hoping we see more Hinckley sailboats coming down the ways in the years to come. **S**