

by Robert H. Perry

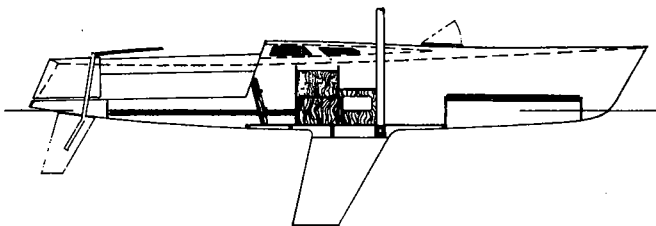
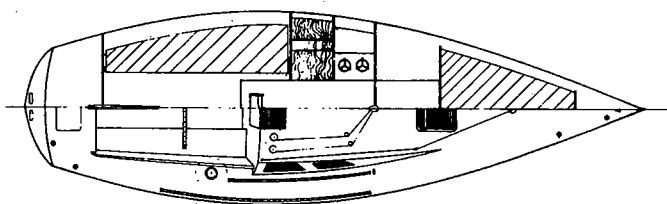
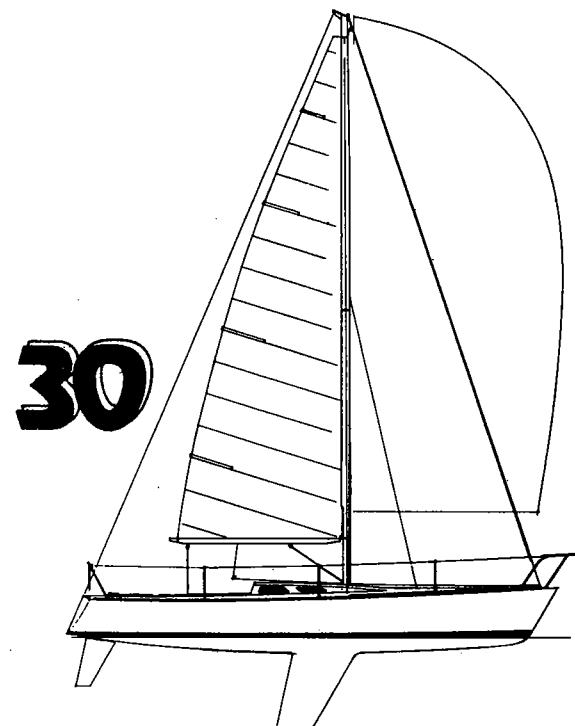
OLSON 30

The Robert Perry design office has become the guiding force in cruising yacht design. The newest Perry designs can be seen in almost every marine publication available today.

Mr. Perry also enjoys a growing reputation for his design commentaries.

We at Castoff feel very fortunate to be able to bring to our readers his evaluations and comments on designs featured in this section.

Hull number 70 will be the first Olson 30 to have a sink as standard equipment. That is definitely significant. No, not the part about the sink, the part about "hull number 70". While there are still a good many sailors who have not heard of the Olson 30, this fleet has grown very rapidly. Originally conceived as a "to hell with the rule" type, the Olson 30 has proven itself in all modes of handicap rac-



ing. It is simply a very fast boat. Consider that this year the Olson 30 placed first and second to finish in the PHRF division of the Swiftsure race. They also managed to finish first and second in class in the same race. These two boats were less than six months old

and the race included conditions from very light air to 20 knots. Despite its diminutive size, the Olson manages to at least keep up with, if not pass, most 40-footers. Upwind in the light stuff they are devastating, and downwind in a breeze it's "AMF".

Last month we looked at the Wilderness 30SX, another ultra light from the group at Santa Cruz. The Olson does share the hollow entry of the Wilderness but in terms of general hull shape that is where the similarity ends. The Olson has a displacement to length ratio of 75. No, that's not a misprint. Read "75.00". The hollow entry fairs into dinghy-like mid-sections extending to a broad and slightly V-ed run. Obviously the boat is all sailing length and photos of the Olson under sail show a strikingly beautiful wave pattern with the Olson apparently making hull speed upwind in moderate breezes. Note the high aspect ratio keel of the Olson and the relatively small rudder. The pleasant hull

lines of the Olson have been accentuated by careful deck design. The total picture is very clean, matching sexy good looks with superlative performance.

The rig of the Olson 30 appears to be a rather short, masthead configuration, until you check the sail area to displacement ratio. The "short rig" turns into a powerhouse when compared with the displacement of the Olson, 3,600 pounds. The sail area to displacement ratio is a very potent 26.4. Compare this to the sail area to displacement ratio of the Wilderness 30SX at 24.43.

In the light and fluky winds of Puget Sound, the Olson will lend itself to very aggressive tactics by virtue of its acceleration. Of course there is another side to this and that is the fact that the Olson should be sailed upright as far as possible to maintain speed and it probably is not a paragon of initial stability. I would guess that the masthead rig was chosen to achieve a relatively low center of effort for the rig. The fractional configuration of the Wilderness would result in a greater heeling moment. The benefit of the masthead rig for the Pacific Northwest is that it allows for a large spinnaker.

One of the side benefits of the move to ultra light displacement is that it places an unusual amount of importance on structural integrity. There is simply not enough weight involved in the design for a builder to "slop" his way through and achieve strength with ignorant overbuilding. To maintain the low weight of the Olson and the plus or minus 20 lb. tolerance the builder claims for one-design class racing, the builder must make the most out of every component in the hull. The Olson 30 uses birch plywood with seven laminations im-

ported from Finland. I have looked at the Olson carefully and I can assure you that this boat is an excellent example of modern production boat building. While the interior is spartan, it is elegantly detailed with impeccable joinerwork. You are probably aware by now that I do like this boat. I never have been fool enough to claim to be totally objective in my reviews.

The interior accommodations of the Olson show berths for four with a large V-berth forward and quarter berths tucked under the cockpit. The Olson 30 puts most of the emphasis on cockpit comfort and racing efficiency and of course the interior does suffer from lack of headroom. But, I feel the overall balance of features of the Olson is ideal, given the performance and appearance of the boat. Sure you could have headroom on a similar design; you could also put a continental kit on your Mercedes. Uffa Fox once said that if you wanted to stand up you should go on deck.

The Olson 30 is built with a balsa cored hull and deck. While balsa remains the most maligned core material, it is in my estimation the best considering the strength to weight properties. I think that most of the problems associated with balsa core occurred during the infancy of the material and they have since been alleviated. The Olson comes very complete for racing but does not include an inboard engine. The options list shows a Suzuki 5HP engine is available.

I think we have seen into the future of racing yacht design and it looks a lot like an Olson 30. George Olson, the designer/builder deserves a bucketful of credit for giving us this exciting new boat so well suited to these areas where the winds are predominantly light.

