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TARTAN 4300 • Designed for fast, shorthanded cruising, the new Tartan 4300 offers an epoxy hull, carbon fiber spars and the quality to last a lifetime.

Tartan Yachts has been building high quality cruising boats in Ohio since the early 1960s when founder Charlie Britten launched the first Tartan 27, a Sparkman & Stephens design that set the standard for the company in the years that followed. One of the most venerable brands in American sailing, Tartan is one of a very few companies that remains afloat from the early days of

production boat building. And, over the last 40-plus years, the company has set the standard for quality and innovation in the “American School” of production yacht design that remains in full force today. Even at first look, you will know the new 4300 is a Tartan and know that it was created to carry Tartan traditions forward.

The big news coming out of Tartan and C&C this year is that the company has been purchased by new owners and that the future for the builder and its associated regional dealers is brighter than it has been in years.

So, it was with a sense of anticipation that we joined the local Tartan dealer in Miami following the Miami Strictly Sail show to test sail the Tartan 4300 on Biscayne Bay. From the dock we were struck at once by the boat’s simple, clean lines, the handsome marriage of the deck house to the hull, wide side decks and the large mainsail and small fore triangle of the “Cruise Control Rig.” On deck there is just enough teak to make the boat look like a traditional yacht. Plus, a dark blue hull always gives a boat an elegant look.



We motored south into Biscayne Bay before hoisting the mainsail. The main in the tall Cruise Control Rig sits in a pocket boom that is wide enough for the full battened sail to flake itself and then get covered with a nifty sail cover. The mainsheet and halyard run aft to a cabin top winch next to the companionway, so hoisting the sail and then trimming it is simple.

The jib is even simpler. Rigged on a roller furling system, the jib is just under 100-percent of the fore triangle so it can be self tacking.

The tack and clew are quite low to the deck so the sail offers maximum drive in a small package. The sheeting arrangement uses a curved track on the foredeck for the sheet car, which runs on ball bearings. As the jib is tacked the car rolls to leeward effortlessly as the sail luffs through the tack and then fills again. The jib sheet leads from the car up the mast about 15 feet when it runs through a turning sheave and back down inside the mast to the deck where it runs through another sheave and then through deck organizers aft to the sheet winch.

With the sails set we put the 4300 through a series of tacks in the fresh breeze that was blowing on Biscayne Bay. The big mainsail is handled through a four-part, mid-boom sheeting system that gives plenty of mechanical advantage when trimming. By trimming the sail for shape and then adjusting the traveler it was easy to get the helm to balance out and the boat sailing at its most advantageous heel angle.

Trimming the jib is almost a one-hand operation. Sailing upwind, the blade jib works very well and can be adjusted nicely with the sheet. The jib is fitted with a special clew piece that sports several attachment points. These are used to give the sail optimum leech tension and twist.

Upwind and beam reaching, the large main and small jib work like a charm and make the 4300 very easy for a couple or even a lone watch stander to handle the boat.

Off the wind, the small jib loses efficiency. So, when you want to broad reach or run downwind, you need to lead lazy sheets outboard of the stays and aft to a snatch block near the stern. These sheets will raise the sheeting angle and allow the jib sheet to be eased so the sail will remain full as the wind moves aft.

But the Cruise Control concept offers an even better solution to broad reaching and running with a blade jib. Instead of using the jib downwind, the boat has been designed to carry a roller furling reacher forward of the roller furling jib. This can be rigged on a free-standing roller furling system that attaches to the stem head fitting—Facnor, Harken, Profurl and others make these systems. For normal cruising conditions, you can leave the downwind sail deployed all the time and only stow it when you are leaving the boat for a while. Or, you can put it away every night, if you prefer.



The beauty of the mixed head sail rig is that the blade jib works really well going to windward. Then, when you want to reach off and run downwind, you simply roll up

the jib, roll out the reacher and away you go. We were amazed at the power in the reacher and how much speed it added—almost two knots in 15 knots of breeze.

The 4300 is a very well balanced boat that tracks well but is lively in the puffs and accelerates well. We did not test the boat in anything more than a fresh chop and a good trade wind breeze, but we came away impressed with the high sailing angles—it tacked through 85 degrees—and with its overall pleasant manners.

BUILT TO LAST

Several years ago, Tartan chief designer and operating officer Tim Jackett led the company in a new direction by converting all spars in Tartan yachts to carbon fiber and by deciding to build all of the hulls with epoxy resin. The shift to high-tech composites helps Jackett create boats that are extremely stiff, light and durable—a combination that builds in speed potential, good sailing characteristics and the longevity an owner of a Tartan expects.

The hulls are built using the resin-infusion method, which allows the builder to meter accurately the amount of resin in the hull to achieve the optimum glass-to-resin ratio and a complete saturation of the glass fiber and core layup. The result is a structure that is similar to the hulls of custom grand prix racers and luxury performance yachts. That is why Tartan offers a 15-year, transferable hull warranty against blisters and structural failure.

The carbon fiber rigs are built by sister company Novis Composites, also in Ohio, which supplies all of the Tartan and C&C spars. Uncommon in production boats because of cost and technical complexity, carbon masts, booms and spinnaker poles reduce weight aloft which has a direct and dramatic effect on stability. On a 43-footer, using a carbon mast instead of an aluminum spar is equivalent to putting two, 200-pound crew on the windward rail.



Starting with the new 3400 last year, Tartan introduced the pocket boom designs that make hoisting and dousing the big mainsails much easier. The new booms are carbon fiber laminates that are very light, stiff and durable. The mainsail tacks down to the gooseneck at the mast and the clew attaches to the outhaul at the end of the boom. The boom is wide enough for the sail to lie neatly folded or flaked in the pocket. With lazy jacks rigged from the sides of the boom, the sail is very nearly self tending.

Building the boats with exotic composites helps Tartan add a lot of long-term value to the boats. From the design point of view, high tech construction also really adds to a boat's ability to perform well in a wide range of conditions.

PERFORMANCE NUMBERS

The 4300 comes with two keel versions, a shoal keel with the Tartan Beavertail fin swept aft and a standard deep fin keel. The shoal draft version weighs in at about 23,500 pounds, which translates into a sail-area displacement ratio of 195. This is

moderately light but well within the parameters of a good blue water sailing boat. The deep-draft version has an SA/D of 179, which is more on the performance end of the spectrum.

These relatively light performance ratios, which tell us that the boat has plenty of horsepower in the rig and a light, performance hull, will seem to some readers to be on the "racing" side of the racer-cruiser line. In truth, modern materials and construction techniques make it possible to build boats that have excellent performance numbers while still building in the stiffness and strength that long ocean use demands.

The ballast-to-displacement ratio in the shoal draft version is 36.8 percent. This is a comforting number and higher than you will find on most modern performance cruising boats where the average will be around 32. A higher B/D indicates higher stability.

The combination of a stiff hull, with moderate displacement and plenty of easily managed sail area results in a truly modern performance cruiser that will please her owners by sailing quickly, sailing easily and sailing upright.

LIVING ABOARD

As one of this country's leading builders of racer cruisers over the last four decades, Tartan has established a style that is uniquely American and based on a harmony between tradition—the Bristol fashion of the Herreshoffs—and practical, modern design concepts. The interior of the new 4300 is a perfect example of that harmony.

The overall look and feel of the 4300 is of an elegant and proper yacht. The teak and holly soles are traditional and offer good nonskid. The bright white overhead panels detailed with varnished wood battens evoke Bristol traditions. And, the hand rubbed, solid wood cherry cabinets, raised panel doors and drawer fronts, give the boat a feel of genuine quality.

Yet the interior spaces are very bright for a boat finished in wood paneling. The saloon has large overhead hatches and six opening portholes. Note that the hatches and ports are stainless steel instead of aluminum. To enhance brightness, interior lighting has been maximized to offer both general illumination and spot lighting for reading, navigating and working in the galley.

The interior layout comes in two versions, one with the master cabin forward and two quarter cabins aft, or the second with the large master cabin aft and the guest cabin forward.

The two-cabin version offers truly huge spaces for a 43-footer. Both sleeping cabins have large double berths and their own en suite heads. And, both heads have separate shower stalls.

In the three-cabin version, the two aft cabins offer small double bunks—both of which will make great sea berths. The forward head remains the same here but the after head loses the shower stall to make room for the chart table. If you are cruising with two children or you will be entering offshore sailing events, the three-cabin version makes a lot of sense. If you will be spending a lot of time cruising with one other couple, then the two-cabin version offers the better plan. Plus, the two-cabin version has a chart table/office to port that will be the envy of even the owners of much larger cruising boats.

The saloon is a pleasant space that is arranged for comfort in port and safety at sea, which means that there are plenty of handholds always nearby, good places to brace a hip or knee while working with both hands, and small enough floor area so a crew member won't be launched across the boat when it lurches or rolls suddenly.

The U-shaped galley has plenty of counter and storage space, two stainless steel sinks on the centerline, a three-burner stove/oven and good storage and pot lockers beneath the counter. The top-loading fridge/freezer has large, well insulated tops so you will have excellent access to the entire boxes yet won't lose the cold through a side loading door.

The dinette to port is pleasantly rounded for comfort. But the corner cushions can come out to make a straight settee berth when at sea. The dinette will seat four comfortably and up to six with the large table leaf extended to the starboard settee.

The angles of the interior space are interesting and you always have a line of sight that includes portholes, hatches and fore and aft cabins.



BWS THOUGHTS

With the Cruise Control Rig, carbon spars, an epoxy hull and an elegant interior, the new Tartan 4300 offers her owners a cruising boat that sails extremely well and has long legs for offshore sailing.

The 15-year hull warranty underscores the builder's commitment to quality and strength, while the attention to detail both on deck and



below prove their dedication to comfortable, practical and elegant living afloat.

Tartan has been building fine cruising boats for more than 40 years. The new 4300 lives up to and in many ways surpasses the company's long traditions. If you are looking for a finely built American yacht that is honest and sails like the wind, then the new 4300 should be on your short list. It is on ours.

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