

ON TEST DUFOUR 36P

Sprint finish

French builders Dufour wanted a more 'athletic' feel for their new Performance range. Toby Hodges went to Marseille to find out if this athlete has the legs she promises

Dufour yachts have always been a pleasure to sail, but over recent years, as more and more models were released, the lines became blurred between the cruising Grand Large range and the Performance boats, so much so that you couldn't tell them apart at boat shows.

A change was needed for the new Performance line and this smart-looking 36P is certainly a change, offering a more sporty profile, a wider, more spacious and comfortable design, with a plumb stem and lines Dufour describe as 'athletic'.

A departure for the French yard then, but design has been moving very quickly in the

performance cruiser world, so I was concerned that we might have seen it all before and this boat was already looking dated. Plastered with go-faster stripes of the boy-racer sports-hatchback variety, the beamy-chined hull has a strong resemblance to the Elan 350 which launched two years ago, and I can't help but wonder whether Dufour chose a single rudder simply to differentiate her from that impressive boat. She's also slightly longer, beamier, heavier and more expensive than the Elan, so has her work cut out.

Still, I travelled to Marseille wanting the Dufour to win me over.



Photos by Richard Langdon/Ocean Images

TEST FACTS

Test Editor: Toby Hodges



- ▶ Where we tested: Marseille, S France, sailing north-west towards Niolon and a long circuit of the Frioul islands.
- ▶ Wind: Force 2–4 northerly
- ▶ Model: Dufour 36 Performance with deep keel (2.2m) option and performance pack
- ▶ Single aft cabin option





Sailaway star

It's a relief to go off to Dufour for a boat that impressed straight out of the box – the test boat was out in the water and her mast stepped the day before we arrived and the dealers had yet to sail her. Yet sensation and balance were both spot on. The deck layout encourages sail and rig trim, and she felt delicious on the helm, light and responsive.

Upwind she pointed well, tacking in around 75°. She gained extra length in the foot of the jib because of the excellent flatdeck furler and the inboard tracks allow close sheeting angle. With that powerful jib a bit more forestay tension might have improved it even further.

For our first beat the most breeze we had was 16-18 knots apparent and in this the 36P consistently made over 7 knots (6.8 in 15A) pinching. I soon decided I wasn't missing the Elan 350's twin rudders upwind; the Dufour's high-aspect blade made for a useful foil. Equally, having the mainsheet, traveller and backstay controls to hand was a treat for any helmsman who likes to trim.

We set up for the kite hoist under the lee of Niolon to the north-west of the entrance to Marseille harbour. The tackline from the extending bowsprit leads back to a bank of coachroof-mounted clutches, so with dealer Clairmont Clement on the foredeck, I could haul halyard, tackline and sheet comfortably

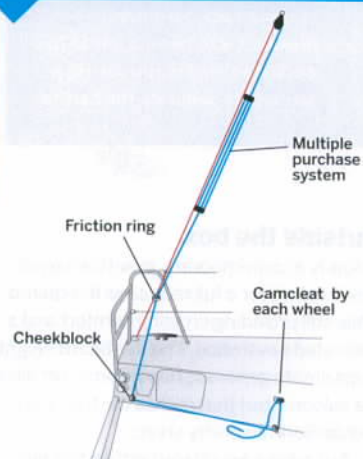


Fun for two: cross-sheeting the spinnaker sheet and sitting forward of the helm in trim slot makes double-handed sailing simple



- 1 The black-painted Sparcraft aluminium rig enhances the go-faster carbon look, while a backstay deflector allows for more roach in the main if desired
- 2 Powerful genoa, with a full foot that hugs the deck thanks to the excellent Facnor Flatdeck furler
- 3 Simple teak footchocks work well for grip at the helm. The locker under the cockpit sole to starboard would take lines and fenders, and leads to the main stowage locker
- 4 Bathing platform lowers to give access to starboard side liferaft locker. Several options are available: half size as we had, full size or with no platform at all.
- 5 Outboard chainplates allow for tracks close to the coachroof and tight sheeting angles. Cars are adjusted from the cockpit
- 6 Cockpit: good for racing, but less so for cruising/relaxing as the benches are too short and coamings too low, although removable backrests and a cockpit table are options

IN DETAIL



Backstay set-up

The backstay is split to the aft quarters as normal, but uses a multiple purchase system (6:1 to 2:1 to 1:1) which makes it easy to crank on tension by 'handraulic' power using a thin Dyneema line led to a simple cam cleat beside each wheel.

A friction ring on the split allows the line to be led, via cheekblocks aft, forward to a block and cleat next to the traveller – easier and cheaper than pumping a hydraulic piston.

from the helm. Two-up sailing with the big black asymmetric was a pleasure, thanks largely to a well-ordered cockpit.

Although the apparent wind remained light, the 36 proved pleasant and fun, making 8 knots in 10. As the breeze dropped further she still consistently maintained one knot less than the apparent breeze, broad and beam reaching – generally at 90-100°, but happily pointing to 55°.

The open cockpit means you can pick and choose which winches to lead spinnaker sheets to – we opted to lead them to the large primaries, sunk into the coamings, allowing the helmsman to control the main and the crew to concentrate on sheet trim.

▲ **Above: the 36P sits on her chine and slices upwind. She's too heavy to be a planing raceboat but is nimble, fun and responsive**

It's a great set-up for the helmsman or mainsheet trimmer, although the backstay and traveller lines can get tangled, and I'd mount the compasses on the aft end of the coachroof as they currently make uncomfortable seats!

For racing with a full crew the after part of the cockpit benches can be lifted off and the teak toerails can be removed for hiking. However, in cruising mode you might find the benches rather too short and coamings are low, with no sprayhood, offering little protection from the elements.

Another 5-10 knots of wind would have been magic, but the 36P remained fun and kept sailing despite increasingly light airs.

1 Saloon A very practical area. The portside leaf of the table detaches and mounts at the base to adjoin the port berth to make it larger, while the forward, central section of the table flips to reveal a heatproof mat for hot pans.

2 Galley A small, but well-worked area, which includes a large lift-top fridge, a stowable cover for the two-burner stove, a double slide-out bin below the double sink and practical locker space – although oddly, no sliding drawers – plus central bilge stowage.

3 Navstation Sizeable chart table for this size of boat, with comfortable seat, tidy switchboard and wiring access, and a raised locker that hinges out for mounting a plotter. The table has two small panels that flip over to reveal grooves for pencils/pens, while the table itself lifts and slides to provide space for a laptop.

4 Forward cabin Twin doors serve to give the cabin a sense of space and light, as well as providing access for hauling and packing sails. The berth opens up butterfly-style for stowing sails, a leeboard divides it into two – a rail on the deckhead means you can rig a leecloth to separate the berths.



Outside the box

Below is a contemporary, practical layout, which caters for a full race crew if required, while still providing cruising comfort and a dedicated navstation. The freeboard height helps create generous headroom – 6ft 3in in the saloon – but that makes the five-step companionway pretty steep.

Two cabins are offered in the standard version, although there is also the option of having a very narrow double berth instead of the garage/workshop area that is located abaft the heads. With this configuration you would be able to race with eight crew by utilising the 1.93m saloon berths.

Clever features abound, but it was a surprise to find movable freshwater ballast – not for short tacking, but for long offshore legs on one tack. The 100lt tanks reside under the saloon berths and a pump is used to switch the contents, which takes around two and a half minutes.

A large sliding companionway hatch,

overhead flush hatches, hull and coachroof windows combine with white hull liner and deckheads to keep it very light below, in attractive contrast to the mahogany trim (Maabi veneer). Unfortunately, I found a few of my pet hates, including creaky floorboards and cupboards that slam.

However, there were some very good ideas too. For instance, the Corian top to the stove removes for racing, as does the saloon table; double doors to the forward cabin means you have lots of space to haul and pack sails; and the timber strips on the deckhead incorporate long grabrails as well as spotlights. And there are numerous clever stowage options all round the boat – in the bilge, below the sinks and tables plus the useful soft canvas pockets throughout.

Basic joiner work and fittings are commensurate with her price, but Dufour have to be congratulated for their admirable amount of clever thought and practical solutions in the interior.



5 Aft cabin and heads Good headroom, turning room and light. A double wardrobe and shelf provide the stowage, and the double berth can be split by a leecloth stowed below.

By doing away with a second aft cabin, a useful amount of stowage space is gained, although it is quite awkward to get to as it's only properly accessible through the heads.



3

Conclusion

Dufour's stated aim was to emphasise the difference between the Grand Large and Performance ranges, something that potential customers had found confusing. A modern hull design and bold aesthetics signal a move in the performance direction and some very practical touches – notably stowage, removable weight and using items that double in purpose – make her stand out.

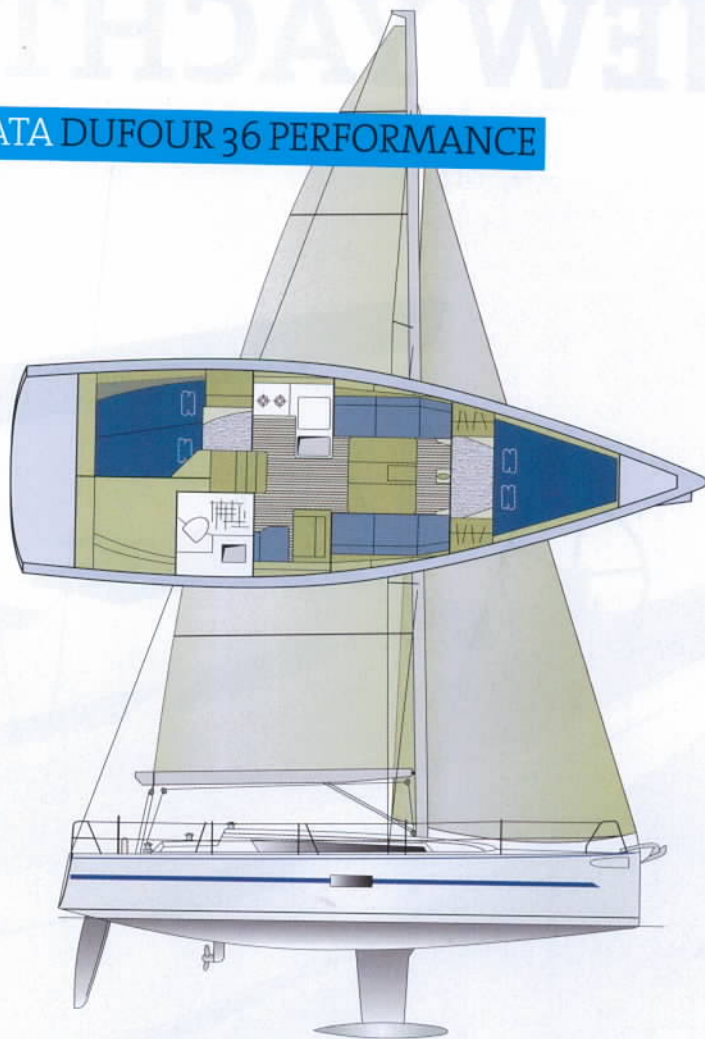


But it's the performance and ease of handling that's ultimately likely to sell the 36P. I really enjoyed sailing her and itched for a bit more breeze, when I'm sure she'd be even more fun. Highly responsive on the helm, the 36P can certainly be enjoyed sailing two-up, which is a big bonus, thanks to a well thought out deck layout.

Dufour deserve credit for their creative solutions throughout the yacht.



DATA DUFOUR 36 PERFORMANCE



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	10.99m	36ft 1in
LWL	10.21m	33ft 6in
Beam (max)	3.61m	11ft 10in
Draught	2.20m	7ft 3in
Disp (lightship)	6,400kg	14,109lb
Ballast	1,900kg	4,189lb
Sail area	69.9m ²	752ft ²
Berths	6-8	
Engine (saildrive)	29hp	21.6kW
Water	200lt	44gal
Fuel	90lt	20gal
Sail area: disp	20.6	
Disp: LWL	168	
Price (ex VAT)	€118,000	(£95,415)

Design: Umberto Felci
www.dufour-yachts.com

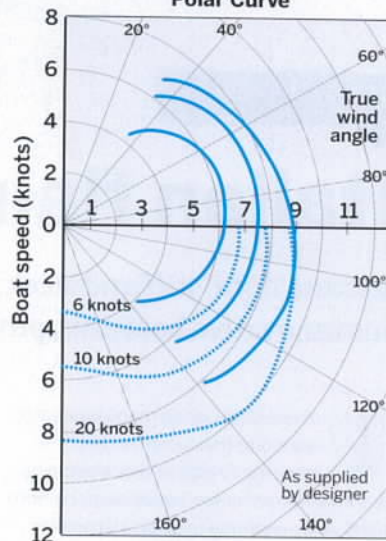
SEE THE VIDEO

yachtingworld.com/video



Or scan this code with your phone to access the Dufour 36P video
 See page 20 for instructions

Dufour 36 Polar Curve



Stability

