



DORADE

Originally launched 1930



MANY FACTORS COME INTO PLAY WHEN A PRE-OWNED YACHT is put up for sale. Potential buyers will look at the vessel's age, her visual appeal and, of course, her condition and inventory. Her name, performance, comfort and sea-keeping will be taken into account, as will value for money and the

reputation of her builder. Reviews in magazines and on the Internet can also be influential.

With classic yachts, however, the two most important considerations, which override all the others, are the reputation of the designer and the yacht's provenance.



THESE PAGES: DORADE WAS BUILT AT THE MINNEFORD YARD ON CITY ISLAND, NEW YORK, UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF ROD STEPHENS, OLIN'S BROTHER, WHO DEVELOPED AN EFFICIENT DECK LAYOUT AND A NEW TYPE OF DECK VENTILATOR (THE DORADE VENT) WITH A BAFFLE THAT SEPARATES INCOMING AIR FROM SPRAY



Dorade, which in 2012 was designated the official flagship of her design studio, Sparkman & Stephens, has both and they are a potent mix – every budding yacht designer aspires to equal S&S.

Mention *Dorade* to any naval architect and their eyes will light up. When she was launched in 1930 she represented a breakthrough in design and is claimed to have transformed the shape of offshore sailing yachts for decades afterwards. Her history is laced with both fame and notoriety. Olin Stephens and his family were given a tickertape parade up Broadway in New York City after she won the Transatlantic Race in 1931, and in the same decade San Francisco playboy bachelor Jim Flood entertained attractive starlets on board and featured in the society pages of the day.

The yacht was built as the United States slid into the Great Depression, but she epitomised the spirit of positive energy that overcomes adversity in difficult times. Olin Stephens was a shy man but in partnership with the more outgoing Drake Sparkman, his observation, planning, intuition and quiet persistence brought success.

Matt Brooks, *Dorade's* present owner, is an adventurer who flew solo at the age of 13, set a record for circumnavigating the

globe (westward) in a plane, and has racked up first mountain ascents in the Sierra Nevada and the French Alps. As reigning Six Metre class vintage division world champion, his latest idea is to assemble a team with the right chemistry and skills and to enter his yacht in all the races she won in her prime. He started with the 2012 Newport to Bermuda Race, where she achieved a respectable fourth in class.

Brooks fell for *Dorade* at first sight, having looked at a number of boats on the market in 2010, including one that was already renovated and which he described as being 'too



good'. *Dorade* was alongside and in need of attention. She had spent some years in San Francisco Bay, Brooks' home waters. That, and a sea trial, sealed it, and his 'crazy idea', as it is referred to on dorade.org, is shaping up well.

Putting the yacht into ocean racing unlike anything she had encountered before meant she needed some strengthening. A refit in Italy in 1997 included replacement of her decks, after which she enjoyed some success on the Mediterranean classic circuit before returning to the United States in 2006. More refit work was done under Edgar Cato's ownership in 2006-07. However, there are refits and there are major restorations. *Dorade* was in luck when she caught Brooks's eye. Expense was not spared.

'Make her as near perfect as you can,' was the brief given to Joe Loughborough, who oversaw her most recent upgrade in Newport, Rhode Island, throughout the better part of 2011, but rather than going to one shipyard for a refit, *Dorade* benefited from a thorough 'organic', longer-than-anticipated rebuild from the keel up.

'In the 2006-07 refit, we took out the whole interior, replaced 35 pairs of frames, took the engine out and replaced all the planking below the waterline,' says Ed Van Keuren of Buzzards Bay Yacht Services. 'We didn't touch the deck, which had been replaced in Italy, but we removed the sheer strake to get at the top of the frames. Then, after she was sold



THIS PAGE: STUDENTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL YACHT RESTORATION SCHOOL IN NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, BUILT A REPLICA OF *DORADE*'S ORIGINAL TENDER, WORKING FROM S&S PLANS AND PHOTOGRAPHS. IT IS LAPSTRAKE PLANKED, USING CEDAR WITH MAHOGANY AS THE SHEER STRAKE, AND IS TRANSPORTED FIXED OVER THE YACHT'S SKYLIGHTS



ABOVE: A NEW RUDDER WAS EXPERTLY MADE BY DAVE COX
BELOW: MATT BROOKS ABOARD HIS YACHT

to Matt Brooks, we built new spars, including main, mizzen and booms.

'Phip Hallowell of Rig Pro (Southern Spars) surveyed the existing rig in July 2010, and despite the fact that it was in pretty good shape for its age, he advised that it was definitely in need of replacement considering the future race schedule. A consortium of designers and engineers and sailors batted around various rig configurations and came up with a stiffer and stronger section. Scott Vogel from Southern ran the numbers through our Southern rig calc program as well.

'Greg Stewart [of Nelson/Marek Yacht Design] and I then came up with the appropriate standard rigging package to support it and keep it traditional. Greg is meticulous and every fitting was weighed and measured to make sure we would achieve the best result.'

A year later, when the rig and boat came together, 'the stepping and tuning went off without a hitch. The new rigs are noticeably stiffer than the old sections and the boat handles really well in a seaway'.

Stewart has been involved with *Dorade* since the spring

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of 2007. After being introduced to Paul Buttrose, who was looking after the yacht, he started a preliminary rig study that became comprehensive by the autumn after he had sailed her that summer. In the autumn of 2008, Stewart did a preliminary engine investigation, with the scope of his work rapidly increasing after Brooks bought the yacht. This included Velocity Prediction Program (VPP) analysis of rig options, main mast design, tang metal research and the design and eventual replacement of the rig.

The refit expanded into a major undertaking comprising the aforementioned and new electrical systems, electronics including radar, and a new galley arrangement and stove. Stewart says: 'The level of fit and finish is spectacular.' The *Dorade* vents are original.

Sail technology has progressed a long way since *Dorade*'s first suit of sails were bent in 1930. However, her North Sails racing inventory was designed to look the part, maintaining a traditional appearance. Cloth choices were compared and the best Dacron fabrics with low stretch and high durability qualities were specified.

'The upwind racing inventory is made almost exclusively of NorDac fabrics for low aspect sails,' says North's Mike Toppa. 'Due to the deck layout and ergonomics, we learned that the most efficient downwind sailing is done with asymmetric spinnakers, which are easier and quicker to set, douse and gybe than symmetric spinnakers. *Dorade* is narrow and lightweight with limited righting moment, so it's challenging to sail in a breeze, but we have a reefing and headsail area reduction sequence that keeps the boat





upright and going fast in windier conditions.'

North Sails were working on an offshore inventory. The brief was to be 'more condensed, since there is very little room down below for the off-watch crew to live, plus store sails'. Space below is compact compared with today's beamy yachts. In the foreword to Douglas Adkins' superbly researched, informative book, *Dorada, The History of an Ocean Racing Yacht*, Llewellyn Howland III writes: 'Her accommodations are spartan... She sails on her ear. She is a great roller in a seaway. Her berths are like coffins. Who in their right minds would want to own or go racing offshore in such a boat as this?' But then, what adventurous sailor wouldn't?

With Stephens' very own 'navigator's bunk' to starboard at the base of the companionway ladder, details influenced by the Stephens family home's furniture, and a signal flag box – a distinctive element of the interior when filled with flags – the interior oozes history and energy.

Brooks' wife, Pam Rork Levy, sourced period linen for the cabins and points out the full-length dressing mirror, commenting: 'Olin was quite a snappy dresser.'

If it wasn't for the *Dorada* vents filtering fresh air below, you'd be forgiven for feeling you could still smell the original atmosphere here. Imagine the excitement with flags being passed up on deck, approaching The Lizard light at 05.45 on 21 July, 1931, en route to the Transatlantic Race finish in Plymouth, having signalled CPV – 'Which am I?' – to the lighthouse keeper, then spotting the keeper's signal flags fluttering NAX – 'You are First'.

Tim Warlick, a traditional cabinetmaker, was brought in by Martin Dever to build the galley and navigation station. 'A mock-up was created from which templates were made to build from,' says Dever. 'Since there was not an engine [previously in that location], the galley, engine compartment and navigation station needed reconfiguring.

'There was concern about weight. The decision was made to use a lightweight aircraft material for carcass construction – phenolic impregnated honeycomb with a skin of sixteenth-of-an-inch marine plywood. The challenge was to disguise

THIS PAGE: THE INTERIOR MAHOGANY WAS TREATED WITH TRADITIONAL CHEMICALS, BLEACHING AND COLOUR GLAZES TO REPRODUCE THE MELLOW, SEASONED TONES OF THE ORIGINAL. THE FURNITURE LAYOUT OF THE DECKHOUSE WAS REVERSED TO GIVE PLEASANT VIEWS INSTEAD OF OVERLOOKING THE SALOON BELOW. THE LIBRARY HAS AN EN SUITE HEAD AND A PULLMAN BERTH SO THAT IT CAN DOUBLE AS AN EXTRA CABIN



DORADE AT LES VOILES DE ST BARTH

'Insanity!' Matt Brooks declared when I asked why he chose a classic sailing yacht. Lots of activities appear foolish at first glance – climbing mountains and flying solo around the world (both done by Brooks) to name but two. Ocean racing on an octogenarian yawl, starting with the Newport-Bermuda Race, is another.

But racing aboard *Dorada* in her 'tuning-up' Caribbean circuit soon makes you realise that there are excellent reasons to go classic. Most important, the racing boats were built to be self-sufficient and cope with anything the weather can throw at them. When Olin Stephens was asked a few years ago what he thought of today's breed of superyachts, his only criticism was that some of them lacked sheer. I suspect he preferred

direct manual winches to push-button trimming too. *Dorada* has plenty of sheer, and despite being relatively tender she gives one a sense of security even when it's time to reef. She's a wet boat but thrives in a breeze, and no one feels concerned when she dips her bulwarks.

From his mountaineering expeditions, Brooks knows the importance of preparation and choosing the right equipment. Indeed, he invests his experience in his own company, Brooks Range Mountaineering. He has the knack of pulling together the right people to achieve objectives, and motivates through a genuine desire to bring out the best in a team.

Having read some of the crew profiles, detailing championship

wins galore, I was a touch apprehensive about joining mid-regatta – especially as they had already scored firsts in each race – but skipper Jamie Hilton soon put any concerns aside during the pre-race briefing.

Continuous sharing of information and thoughts was the order of the day in a quietly professional manner while sails were set, trimmed, reefed, bagged and set again. Steve Foraste (bow), Buddy Rego (mainsheet), John Burnham (joint helm), Jess Sweeney (meteorologist) – to name those on the Newport-Bermuda crew aboard in St Barths – ably assisted Jamie and owner Matt (at main mast) and wife Pam (mizzen) achieve team success. The debrief again emphasised good communication as the key. Even topics such as

the efficient delivery of snacks and water to the crew on deck were brainstormed.

As winner of the LVDSB Classic class, *Dorada* was tuning up nicely. By the time she set off for ocean racing again, both she and her crew were in good shape to take on the elements.

With the yacht gaining admiration wherever she sails (I saw two of the world's largest superyachts' crews come out on deck with binoculars and cameras as we tacked between them off Gustavia) and her crew enjoying mental and physical teamwork, the purchase and restoration of *Dorada* for offshore sailing seems anything but insane. A breath of fresh air, she invigorates all who sail aboard her.

Nick Jeffery

this material as traditional frame-and-panel construction.'

Warlick adds: 'My expertise was best utilised during the finish work. Having much experience with the restoration and reproduction of 18th-century furniture, I wanted to see that the mahogany had a good "old" colour. Often the new woodwork on refit classic yachts is coloured with just an oil stain or left natural. The effect can be a bit raw and crude.

'For *Dorada* we developed a method using traditional chemical stains, bleaching and colour glazes to produce a mellow, seasoned colour before varnishing. The effect was to be subtle, definitely not heavy handed "faking", but to achieve a look for the new elements that agreed with the original ones.'

Throw in the original S&S 'seahorse' burgee and a replica tender built at Newport's International Yacht Restoration

School and fitted over the skylights, and *Dorada's* restoration was complete.

'I'd say the boat is in tip-top shape, is structurally sound and all mechanical systems have been completely updated,' says Dever. 'I think she'll be as competitive as ever. The hull is stiff and fair, the new rudder was masterfully crafted by Dave Cox and every inch of the rig is per original design.'

Following her fourth-in-class finish in the 2012 Newport-Bermuda Race – she was also on the second-place team for the Onion Patch Series – *Dorada* has a busy diary, competing in a Transpac in 2013 before attempting the 2015 Transatlantic and Fastnet races.

Classic yacht enthusiasts eagerly wait to find out if her crew will see a NAX signal – or, more likely in this modern age, an email or text – as they approach England.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA:
16.02m (52' 6")
LWL:
11.85m (38' 10")
BEAM:
3.13m (10' 3")
DRAUGHT:
2.52m (8' 3")
DISPLACEMENT:
16.79 tonnes
SAILS:
North Sails
UPWIND SAIL AREA:
144m² (1,550ft²) (main, 148% jib and mizzen)
OFFWIND SAIL AREA:
251m² (2,701ft²) (main, main A2, mizzen and mizzen A2)
ENGINE:
30hp Yanmar 3GM30
TRANSMISSION:
ZF15MIV V-drive with Aquadrive CV15
PROPELLER:
Gori folding two-blade racing
WATERMAKER:
Spectra
STOVE:
Taylor kerosene

FUEL CAPACITY:
117 litres (31 US gals)
WATER CAPACITY:
200 litres (53 US gals)
HOLDING TANK CAPACITY:
34 litres (9 US gals)
SAILING INSTRUMENTS:
B&G H2000 with wind, boatspeed, depth, heading, water temperature
MASTS:
Baltic Boat Services
CHART PLOTTERS:
2 x B&G Zeus, 2 x A-12 chart plotters
RADAR:
B&G Broadband BR24
GPS:
B&G ZS50
PROJECT MANAGER:
Kyle Dufur
ORIGINAL NAVAL ARCHITECTURE:
Sparkman & Stephens
REFIT NAVAL ARCHITECTURE:
Nelson/Marek Yacht Design
ORIGINAL BUILDER/YEAR:
Minneford, New York/1930
REFIT YARD:
LMI Yard, Portsmouth, Newport, Rhode Island

