

The Reynolds 33, Ripping it up at 22 Knots

The Reynolds 33 is 2006 Sailing World Boat of the Year Best Multihull Award winner.



When we approached the Reynolds 33 at the U.S. Sailboat Show in Annapolis I said to myself, "I hope it's windy when we sail this thing." The R33 has a spacecraft look to it, and you get the sense there's no lack of power when looking up the 48-foot aluminum rig.

A few things give the R33 its unique appearance. The backrests are strange looking, but then you sit on the deck and lean against them you quickly realize how well they work. The dolphin striker and its beam are on top of the two cabins, which elevate the mast and creates a separate bow area. It also provides support while sailing, as I figured out. Listening to the R33 reps discuss "the sleeping arrangements" below for overnight races and/or camping, I thought we have to try this. I immediately summoned Tony Bessinger, who manages the annual BOTY event, the largest of the group, to go below, lie down, and see what he thought. After coming up for air, I believe his words were: "I don't think I'd be falling asleep down there doing 18 knots," or something to that effect. The outboard engine is on centerline at the aft beam and has a custom long shaft. It appears to be a bit undersized for the job, but by dropping the beam to 14 feet and only using the outboard to get in and out of the slip it probably makes sense.

Time to go sailing. I'll set the stage: It's blowing 26-32 knots from The Bay Bridge, direction North. The Reynolds 33 sailed over to meet with us; they were sporting a triple-reefed main, and planing on a reach; I thought, "This is going to be exciting."

Off we went upwind with a triple-reefed main and a reefed-down jib, recommended by the Reynolds reps. The sail combination was perfect for the conditions; we were flying a hull doing about 13 knots uphill, sailing through large waves. It quickly became apparent that the guy on the mainsail control was critical when we saw the

puffs hit. Easing at just the right moment was key, and the reps have enough time in the boat to recognize when to dump the traveler and sheet.

The R33 tears through the waves; everything is stiff and moving in the correct motion. I wondered whether we had enough sail power to tack in such a large wave pattern. No problem: traveler down, push the helm away, a slight backwind on the jib and wham! We never dropped below 6 knots and quickly re-accelerated to the 13-knot range. The boat locks in, and you don't really have to fight for the numbers, it just keeps hammering home. The boat's speedo and our GPS were both registering 12 to 13 knots continuously, not too bad for the amount of reefs we had.

The seating is very comfortable and all the main controls are right at your fingertips. It got crowded with all four judges and two reps; I can see sailing this boat most of the time (in more normal conditions) with two to four people on beer can races and local shorthanded distance races; now that would be fun. I wonder how long it would take to get from Newport, R.I., to Cuttyhunk Island, Mass. I'm betting not too long.

We ran out of track quickly, and not really wanting to go to Baltimore, we turned the boat in the direction of Norfolk. "Now this is going to be something," I thought to myself. We went with the blast jib and the triple-reefed main at first, and simply took off, reaching 20 knots with ease. After 17.5 knots we seem to be going right up and over the top and passing waves, and that really seem to be the magic number. I was a little concerned that we might stuff the bows, but buoyancy in the forward sections kept the hulls popping out and through each wave. There was never any feeling of losing the rudder control; steerage was solid and responsive—just an awesome feeling.

The breeze backed off and we decided to go with the big screacher and leave the main reefed. Now the boat really popped and found a fast and tricky groove. You definitely wanted to bear off in the puffs and have two competent guys on the controls just in case. A puff would hit, the hull would rise, we would bear off a few degrees and hit 25-knots. I saw crab pots come up and go by in an instant. "We could have sailed all the way down to the mouth of the Chesapeake in no time.

The Reynolds 33 looks like nothing we've seen before, but looks can be deceiving. Whether you're out racing around the cans on Tuesday nights, sailing in that 50-mile local event, or even just going on an overnight with the family to the islands, the R33 will make you smile. I'm not sure if I would race from San Francisco to Kaneohe on one, but I think most other events would be a blast. The pure sailing experience of the R33 is why this is our choice for the 2006 *Sailing World*-BOTY Best Multihull [Reynolds website is at www.R33.com](http://www.R33.com).