

Sailing *BOAT TEST*

Vanguard Nomad

This jazzed up daysailer offers a stable yet swift ride that's perfect for family sailing.

By John Kretschmer with photography by Walter Cooper



The Vanguard Nomad is a 17-foot sloop from the drawing board of Bob Ames, father of the Vanguard 15, and the busy production lines of Rhode Island-based Vanguard Sailboats, builder of the Laser, Sunfish, Optimist, 49er and Zuma. The Nomad is billed as a performance daysailer, and after a quick October session in the Severn River off Annapolis, it immediately became clear that the Nomad is fast, and sailing it is easy, with a sense of purposefulness.

The details

The Nomad is beamy, a full eight feet at maximum, and is stable. The cockpit is broad and uncluttered. The seats are comfortable and adequate for four adults or two adults and a covey of kids. It gives the impression of an aircraft carrier rather than a narrow racing dinghy. But there is real horsepower under the hood.

The well-finished hull weighs 625 pounds. The mast can be raised and the boat rigged by one person—a very valuable feature when sailing with young kids. The whole package, including the 174-square-foot sailplan, can be rigged in about 20 minutes.

On deck

The Nomad provides a simple and easy sailing platform. The “in and out” of the jib is controlled via roller furler. The halyards, sheets and sail controls are clean and well engineered. The mainsheet is led away from the passengers and toward the helmsman.

The Nomad comes standard with a set of 3DL sails built with North's Rotary Molding technology. These sails are based upon North's 3DL big boat racing sails that have been extremely successful in the commercial market and on the race course. Until the RM technology came online, production-built 3DL sails were limited solely to big boats. These high-tech sails seem a bit out of place on a boat marketed as a nonracing family daysailer, but performance-oriented sailors who are concerned that the broad and stable Nomad will cramp their style will be pleased to have them as part of the package.

A galvanized trailer also comes standard with the Nomad, although the boat could also be stored in the water at a dock or on a mooring. The Nomad's centerboard and kick-up rudder

make trailering and storing a simple proposition.

Appropriately the Nomad comes with a lot of storage space. Four large cockpit lockers provide ample space that is augmented by two forward watertight compartments. Coolers and other kid gear will find proper space, as will the anchor, a small outboard, the spinnaker and other boat equipment

The Nomad will really come into its element when used for recreational sailing by two adult couples or by older, more experienced kids. The boat is simple enough that it can be sailed by one and maneuvered by two. It's equipped with an 180-square-foot asymmetrical spinnaker that is easily deployed, handled and doused. The spinnaker, designed with the broad and stable hull in mind, is sizeable and powerful enough to produce real speed off the wind.

Under sail

On a blustery October day following the United States Sailboat Show, in Annapolis, Maryland, I had a chance to try out this new daysailer. Having grown up a child of the fiberglass sailboat revolution, spending time bashing around in a Laser as a youth and now a father looking to find that perfect vehicle to spark that same love of sailing in the next generation, I'm on the lookout for a family daysailer that hits a sweet spot between a family RV and a jazzed-up sports car. After a spin in the Nomad, I found it to have the right mix of performance with a stable, well-balanced ride to meet this criteria. The boat accelerated quickly but was light and smooth enough through the water so that the loads were not extraordinary. The Nomad will make a fine daytripper or training platform for yacht clubs or sailing schools.

There are no immediate plans for a one-design racing component to the Nomad program, and it is not legal for PHRF racing in most areas. However, racing isn't everything and when the breeze picks up, it is capable of providing enough white-knuckled thrills to keep experienced sailors smiling over and over again.

LOA 17.2'	Sail Area 174 sq. ft.
Draft 4'2"	Weight 625 lbs.
Beam 8'	

Base boat price: \$12,500

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