

## A DINGHY FOR WANDERING TYPES

Vanguard's new day sailor breaks from the norm.

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By Dave Reed

Day sailing is a lot like walking; there's really no right or wrong way to do either. Everyone has their own natural strolling pace, and the same can be said about sailors—some prefer destinations, others prefer to roam freely. Some must sail fast, others like it leisurely, and that's the premise behind Vanguard Sailboat's Nomad, a 17-footer that will walk or run—depending on your mood.

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The Nomad was designed by Vanguard 15 and Vector designer Bob Ames, with input from Vanguard chairman Steve Clark. Both of them have speed on the brain, which is obvious in the Nomad. In his designer's comments, Clark says, "Day sailing should equal pleasure sailing, and that demands an even better boat than a racing boat." We wholeheartedly agree.

Ames' answer was a hull and rig combination that's "all about performance"—a boat with a fine entry, long waterline, super-wide beam (8-foot max at the deck), high-aspect rudder and centerboard, tapered mast, asymmetric spinnaker, and a 175-square-foot North 3DLrm sail inventory with roller-furling jib. Ironically, each of these raceboat attributes also make a great day sailing boat as well—the fine entry cuts through chop, the wide beam provides stability at the dock and when sailing, the deep blades enhance control, the tapered mast is easier to step and de-power, and rolling a jib is much quicker and easier than reefing a main.

### ONE THING VANGUARD'S NOMAD HAS PLENTY OF IS ROOM IN THE COCKPIT.

When we tested the boat in 8 knots of wind in flat water, it sailed beautifully. Its waterline beam keeps its tacking angles on the wide side, but downwind, with the asymmetric kite, the boat really jumps to life. An asymmetric spinnaker has a way of sweetening any sailing experience, and this one is no different. At 196 square feet, it's big enough to put some sizzle into the run home, and small enough for a junior sailor to handle easily. With a high clew, it's easy to jibe (and see to leeward), and with spinnaker wells on either side of the cockpit, it's easy to set and douse. Without a doubt, the Nomad is a fun boat to sail, so Ames nailed that part of the equation. But drawing hull lines is often the easy part of designing a recreational day sailer—dealing with all the stuff inside requires some ingenuity. In the Nomad's case, ample seating and storage were the priorities. Because of the boat's width and length, the cockpit has tons of leg and elbow room for four adults, or your average American clan (2.5 kids and the family dog).

To provide a sense of security and an "enclosed cockpit feel" there's inboard seating with angled back rests, and the transom is closed. For those who prefer to sit outboard, the rails are wide enough for a set of cheeks, but there are no hiking straps, which could be problematic for absentminded dinghy sailing types. Sitting inboard is much more comfortable and eases you into the day sailing mindset. Ames and Clark wisely avoided two common small-boat ergonomic trouble spots by running the mainsheet in a shallow well in the cockpit floor, and by using a reverse (or compression) vang on top of the boom. As a result, it's easy for both skipper and crew to cross the boat. Under the four lifting cockpit seats, which are long and wide enough to sprawl out for an après-swim nap, there are long storage lockers. The compartments are approximately 11 inches deep—enough to cram a few daypacks, a small anchor, assorted safety stuff, lifejackets (which should be worn anyway), and a small outboard. A transom-mounted outboard bracket is optional.

Where does the cooler go? The best spot we saw was in the transom, under the tiller, and it was easy to envision a soft cooler nestled there full of lunch and liquids. There's one design element we see as a minor nuisance from the day sailing point of view—with no bow cleat, the only place to tie off an anchor or mooring line is the bow eyelet, which isn't easy to get to.

Another concern we have is righting the boat from a capsize. According to Dave Kirkpatrick, the Vanguard rep who sailed with us (and came up with the boat's name), there's a bit of a technique to righting the boat. Because the boat is so wide, and because the watertight compartments have so much buoyancy, in order to right the boat, one tank must be filled with water through the open spinnaker well. Doing so allows one rail to sink so the other can rise. The water in the tank, says Kirkpatrick, will drain completely in about 4 minutes once the boat is upright. If it sounds scary and illogical to sink a tank in order to right the boat, consider that Open 60s must do the same if they capsize, by pumping water ballast into one tank, swinging the keel to one side, and rolling the boat upright.

Other attributes we like about the Nomad are the optional fold-down swim ladder on the transom (which, from a safety point of view, should be standard equipment), the kick-up rudder and swing centerboard, 2-to-1 jib sheets, and the external halyards. The boat has a double floor, which helps keep water flowing out the transom cutouts when sailing and while sitting on the mooring. Both the hull and deck are PVC cored and vacuum bagged, and the glass is reinforced along the rails (something sailing schools and clubs will appreciate). The sail plan is modestly sized and the boom is set high enough to keep knocks to the head to a minimum. All-in-all, the price isn't bad either, considering \$12,760 dollars gets you the boat, trailer, and 3DLrm sails. (Dacron sails can be ordered if preferred.)

Vanguard says the boat "represents a new category of sailboat," but we think that's a bit of a reach. The Nomad is a day sailer, and day sailing is what it is and has been for centuries—raising a sail and messing about on the water with the singular motive of having fun. For those in no hurry, grandpa's

hand-me down catboat will always do the trick, but for those of us who amp everything we do, the Nomad definitely keeps it real.

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