

Used Boat Notebook

By John Kretschmer

CS 36 Traditional

A Canadian-built racer-cruiser that's well-mannered yet tough enough for the heavy stuff

The virtues of the sweet sailing CS 36 are not well known south of the border; it's one of those fine Canadian-built boats that seems to have fallen off the radar screen for many American used boat buyers. The CS 36 is a high-quality, versatile boat with a proud pedigree. Designed by Raymond Wall, who was for many years the chief designer and engineer for the venerable English firm of Camper & Nicholson, the 36 was introduced at the 1978 Toronto Boat Show. By the time the Tony Castro-designed CS 36 Merlin replaced the Traditional model in 1987, more than 300 CS 36s had been launched, including many that went into service in The Moorings' Caribbean charter fleet.

The original name of Canadian Sailcraft Company was shortened in 1971 to CS, and the company was a quiet success story. Founded by Paul Tennyson in the early 1960s, his small plastics laminating firm began building boats in 1964. Its first boats included a 15-foot daysailer designed by George Cuthbertson and a 12-foot catamaran. The company's first big boat was the CS 27, also designed by Wall and launched in 1977. The success of the 27 prompted the

company's move from a small plant in Toronto to a larger facility in nearby Brampton, Ontario.

The CS 36 followed on the 27's heels and a popular 33 joined the fleet the following year. Castro, who trained with Ron Holland, replaced Wall as the firm's in-house designer in 1984 and contributed designs for the 30, 34, 40, 44 and the Merlin 36. Without much fanfare, CS, which is sometimes confused with the successful Canadian builder C&C, became one of Canada's top builders. In 1986, its best year, CS produced nearly 200 boats. Unfortunately, CS could not weather the economic downturn of the late 1980s and early 1990s, and by 1992 the company was reduced to auctioning off most of its tooling.

First impressions

The CS 36 was euphemistically named the Traditional to set it apart from the later Merlin 36. It had a low-slung, modern profile when first introduced. However, unlike other modern boats of the time that seem woefully outdated today, the 36 is still a handsome boat—a sure sign of sound original design work. The pinched reverse transom, an appendage left over from the IOR days, is easily recognized because it is almost always the same color as the wide cove stripe that flows into it, which was a distinctive and attractive styling touch. The sheer is fairly flat and the cabintrunk is low and sleek without a trace of wood. The fine entry has a moderate bow overhang that was a feature of many racer-cruisers in the 1970s and 1980s.

Below the water, the CS 36 has a moderate forefoot that trails into a powerful fin keel. The standard draft is 6 feet, 3 inches, although an optional 4-foot, 11-inch shoal-draft

model was popular with boats destined for the Chesapeake Bay. Aft of the keel there is a bit of bustle and the rudder is mounted on a partial skeg. With a displacement of 15,500 pounds, the CS 36 was moderate for its day, heavier than the Catalina 36 and quite similar, at least by the numbers, to the S2 11.0. The displacement/length ratio of 276 puts the boat in the cruiser category today and suggests that it should be able to stand up to a blow without the micromanagement that lighter, flatter boats require. A sloop rig, the single-spreader mast with an air draft of 52 feet, 10 inches, supports 640 square feet of sail area that translates into a sail area/displacement ratio of 16.5. Most 36s have a PHRF rating of about 120 to 125.

Construction

The CS 36 has a solid fiberglass hull, unlike the later Merlin and many other similar boats of the day, including C&C boats, which for the most part had balsa or foam-cored hulls. Wall was adamant about this construction feature because he didn't like the idea of cored hulls. His views were shaped by the rugged conditions common in the English Channel and North Sea that tend to make designers more conservative. The deck, cabintrunk and cockpit sole are balsa cored. The hull-and-deck joint is on an inward flange and through-bolted on 4-inch centers.

CS used a combination of efficient molded liners and more traditional bonding techniques. Bulkheads are tabbed to the hull and deck and further secured in place by molded liners and molded hull stringers. Molded pieces are used for a partial headliner, interior modules and cabin furniture bases. Overall the construction is very well done and older CSs have aged well. The lead keel is externally fastened and the fiberglass rudder is foam filled with a stainless steel stock.



What to look for

The first thing to look for is a Traditional 36 as opposed to the Merlin, which was in production from 1987 to 1992 and is usually a bit more expensive. Although the two have similar profiles, the Traditional 36 displaces 2,000 more pounds and carries an additional 700 pounds of ballast. Also, early Traditional 36s had shorter spars imported from England. Unless you are planning some high-latitude sailing, look for a boat with the taller rig.

According to several reports, CS was hard hit by the pox plague of the early- and mid-1980s. Most boats will have had one or more bottom jobs by now so it's important to try to find out the blister history of the boat you're considering. Other owner complaints are few and far between. Apparently water-logged rudders are a common problem, something that's anything but unique with foam filled rudders. Also, the CS 36 was originally fitted





A number of CS 36s in good condition can be found, especially in Canada and the Great Lakes.

with gate valves and if these haven't been changed to seacocks they should be. The 1985 CS 36 that I inspected at the Miami Beach Marina has original Marelon ball valves that are functional and don't corrode, although they're vulnerable in a lightning strike. Carefully inspect all age-related items, especially the standing rigging.

One last item to consider in selecting a used boat is location. Many boats seem to be located in Canada and on the Great Lakes, but there are also a good number available in the Caribbean. The freshwater boats, with their overall lack of corrosion, would clearly be my first choice, especially over a boat in from the islands that was used hard in the charter boat trade.

On deck

The T-shaped cockpit, while not spacious, is well set up for both coastal and offshore sailing. The Edson pedestal and wheel is located well aft and the molded helmsman's seat increases visibility and makes long steering stretches more comfortable. T-shaped cockpits in general allow easy access to the wheel, although the cockpit seats are often not quite long enough to stretch out on. The single lever engine control is mounted in a user-friendly position on the port coaming, instead of down by your feet or through the wheel spokes on the pedestal.

There is a stout bridgedeck, which is often overlooked on today's designs. Most sail controls are led aft. Lewmar 30s and 40s were the standard halyard winches, mounted on the aft end of the trunkhouse. Lewmar 43s were the standard primaries, which are mounted on the coaming just out of reach of the helmsman. Most CS 36s seem to have converted to midboom sheeting with the traveler mounted over the companionway. The original design had the traveler running across the bridgedeck.

Original deck hardware was first-rate and CS offered features usually

found on larger boats, including a stainless steel stemhead fitting with double anchor rollers, an external anchor locker and enclosed fair leads for the mooring lines. Rod rigging was an option, although most boats are fitted with 1-by-19 wire. The handrail on the cabintrunk is made of functional and low-maintenance stainless steel. The bow and stern double rail pulpits are top quality but the original aluminum stanchions are a bit light. The molded nonskid surface on the boat I inspected was well worn.

Down below

The interior plan is fairly standard for an aft-cockpit 36-foot cruiser, however the teak joinerwork and overall workmanship is very nice. The forward cabin includes a V-berth double with a nice array of drawers and lockers underneath. The head is to starboard and includes a teak grate that covers the shower sump. The standard toilet was a high-quality Wilcox Crittendon. The saloon features an L-shaped settee to starboard that converts to a double berth, and with the straight settee opposite makes a good sea berth with the addition of a lee cloth. Two table arrangements were available—a fixed centerline table or bulkhead-mounted foldaway version. There is decent storage in lockers and shelves above and behind the settees, although the water tanks occupy the space beneath the settees.

The galley is immediately to port when you drop below. The stainless steel countertops are impressive and most functional. There is a single sink, a three-burner stove and oven and a decent-size icebox/refrigerator. There are large fiddles for when working under way, a dedicated trash bin and outboard lockers for food stowage. The foul weather locker next to the companionway can also be accessed from the cockpit locker—a feature rarely found on a small boat. The nav station is opposite the galley and includes a good-size chart table with shelves above. The electric

cal panel is outboard and there are three drawers below. The head of the large quarter berth doubles as the nav station seat and some previous owners have added custom cushions to serve as seat backs.

Engine

A couple of different engine models were available including a three-cylinder Volvo 28-horsepower and a 33-horsepower Mitsubishi. Most boats were fitted with a 30-horsepower Westerbeke coupled with a British Leyland block. Although the CS 36 is an easily driven hull, this is just enough engine for serious cruising and it will be hard pressed to push the boat into a choppy head sea. Access is primarily from behind the companionway and through a side panel in the quarter cabin. The aluminum fuel tank holds 35 gallons, translating into a realistic range under power of 250 to 300 miles.

Under way

A friend of mine, Gary Ward, delivered a CS 36 from the East Coast to The Moorings charter base in Tortola several years ago. He remembers the boat to be well mannered in a blow and surprisingly dry down below even when blasting along to weather. The boat was fitted with a belt-driven, wheel-mounted autopilot and it steered the entire trip. Ward told me that the boat topped 7 knots frequently on a close reach, and that they completed the 1,200-mile passage from Charleston, South Carolina, in eight days, averaging 150 miles a day.

Owners report that the main and No. 1 genoa can be carried up to about 20 knots. The helm doesn't load up easily and the boat is well balanced. The cockpit design lends itself to having a dedicated helmsman and a trimmer, but the boat is easy to handle and responds when sailed aggressively. The CS 36 is that rare combination, satisfying to race locally, capable of winning its class in the Bermuda or Mackinac races, and tough enough for serious bluewater cruising.

Conclusion

Prices for used CS 36s range from around \$40,000 for an early boat to around \$70,000 for a later model. You can find other 15- to 20-year-old 36-foot production boats for less money, but few match the inspired design and quality construction of the CS 36. This boat belongs in the same quality category as Sabre and Tartan.

Techline

SAILING Magazine's Value Guide

CS 36 Traditional (5-sailboat rating system)



PRICE: Price is not the prime reason for choosing a CS 36, but quality always comes at a cost. Diligent research and careful shopping can likely uncover a clean, well-equipped 36 for around \$50,000.



DESIGN QUALITY: Wall's design has aged very well indeed. The boat is more cruiser than racer these days, the logical evolution, but the 36 offers an appealing blend of performance and seaworthiness.



CONSTRUCTION QUALITY: The CS 36 is understated in appearance but beneath the bland fiberglass profile the construction is top quality. The solid glass hull is an advantage—as the boat ages, it is one less potential problem.



USER-FRIENDLINESS: Easy to race and easy to cruise, sounds like the definition of user-friendly.



SAFETY: Solid construction, high ballast-to-displacement ratio, stout bridgedeck and ample handholds above and below make for a safe boat. The lifelines and stanchions could be beefier.



TYPICAL CONDITION: This rating would likely be higher but some of the 36s down in the islands have been sailed hard and put away wet.



REFITTING: The use of molded liners limits creativity and access when it comes to refits. The engine is not easily removed for repowering and other areas of the boat are not easy to work on.



SUPPORT: Although CS is out of business, an active owner's group offers advice and support. Find them on the Web at www.closereach.com/csoa/cs36.htm.



AVAILABILITY: With a large production run that lasted until 1987 there is usually a good selection of boats for sale at any one time. A quick check of Yachtworld.com and BoatTrader.com turned up nearly 15 boats.



INVESTMENT AND RESALE: The CS 36 has held its value well over the years, as most quality products do, and there is no reason to expect this to change, especially as new boat prices continue to soar.

