

The new power-sailer from Poland

If you like the idea of the MacGregor 26, but fancy something a little bigger and plusher, the Odin 820 might be the boat you're looking for.

David Harding reports.

PRICE: £20,797 (inc VAT, exc. engine and trailer)

Since the MacGregor 26X was introduced eight years ago, it has had the power-sailer market all to itself. And that's surprising. When a new idea proves to be as successful as the MacGregor has been, other people are usually quick to copy it, or, at the very least, to borrow some key elements and present them in a slightly different package.

Yet, until last season, buyers who fancied a roomy trailer-sailer that would also motor fast enough to tow a water-skier had

nowhere else to go, unless they tracked down one of Dufour's Duos. The French giant built a hundred or so of its variation on the MacGregor theme, but never pushed them and still, apparently, has 60 or so sitting outside one of its factories. A Finnish builder had a go, too, producing a small number of a boat called the Vi:Ta, which didn't prove successful. Although rumours have circulated from time to time about other projects in Europe, nothing else appeared until the Odin 820 was shown at the Dusseldorf Boat Show in January last year.



A square transom and large outboard are clues that the Odin is no ordinary sailing boat



Here, at last, was a boat that looked as though it could present a serious threat to the MacGregor. Or so thought John Wittey, who wanted a boat with a big engine that would get him home if the weather threatened to make him late for work. Having looked at the Mac, he thought the Odin felt more substantial. He also liked the sidedecks, because they allowed him to walk forward rather than clamber over the coachroof.

So he had a test sail, placed an order and then, believing it was a boat he could sell in the UK, negotiated the dealership with Volker and Gerda Lamprecht, the German couple who had given birth to the Odin.

John sold six boats at the Southampton Boat Show, and has found buyers for five more since. He's now busy arranging over 100 test sails. It's the sort of start most new dealers can only dream about.

But why has the Odin caused such a stir, and why have several would-be MacGregor owners decided to spend several thousand pounds more on the German alternative?

To answer that question, we need to look at the reasons why the Lamprechts started the project. They were MacGregor dealers in Germany who decided to create their



own boat. They would keep the bits of the MacGregor they liked, discard those they didn't, and add some features of their own. The design and development work was carried out in conjunction with Andrzej Palarz, a boatbuilder who sold MacGregors in Poland.

Poles apart?


Visually, the similarities between the Odin and the MacGregor are obvious. By nature of their dual-purpose roles, both have high freeboard, square transoms and rather squat rigs. I looked at the compromises in the MacGregor's design in PBO 438 (June 2003): most of them apply equally to the Odin. To summarise, a sailing boat that can motor at planing speeds won't sail as well as one that's intended purely for sailing. And since it can't be expected to compete with a dedicated motorboat under power, it's unlikely to appeal to purists of either persuasion. Odin buyers are generally people who, like John, want something with a mast and sails yet which still lets them turn a key and motor home at 15 knots.

As for the differences between the two power-sailers, the Odin is more than a foot



Heeling to the breeze: water ballast and a large genoa call for early reefing

(0.3m) longer than her American rival, both overall and on the waterline. She's 4.5in (110mm) beamier – because the European maximum width for trailing is greater than in many American states – about 800lb (227kg) heavier, and carries marginally more sail. Her centreplate is of lower aspect ratio and is ballasted with 110lb (50kg) of lead. It was originally glass-sheathed timber, weighing just 55lb (25kg), but the builders were persuaded to make it heavier when the North-German dealer, Dirk Kroll, announced his intention to sail from Germany's Baltic coast, around the top of Denmark and down the other side to Holland. Because it was winter and he knew there would be lumps of ice floating around, he took the precaution of having the hull laminate increased around the waterline at the bow.

Following Herr Kroll's successful voyage, all Odins have been built to what became known as the North Sea specification. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to think of the boat as an offshore cruiser. A keel weighing just over 150lb (68kg) is light for a 27-footer, and high-sided, water-ballasted designs with relatively low angles of 

PBO new boat test Odin 820

vanishing stability are still more at home close to land in calm waters – like those that greeted me when I arrived in Grado, on the Italian coast between Trieste and Venice, to test her.

Full speed ahead

Motoring trials came first. The propeller used initially on the 70hp Johnson four-stroke produced disappointing results, so it was changed for a test prop of coarser pitch. Then, with four people on board, the GPS showed our speed rising from just short of 8 knots at 2,700 rpm to 12 knots at 4,000 rpm and a maximum of 16.7 knots at full throttle. On an empty boat without a mast, Volker Lamprecht says he has recorded 24 knots.

Odins sold in the UK will have Honda or Suzuki engines as standard, though the Johnson looks nicely colour-coordinated with its white livery. Together with the Suzuki equivalent – which is based on the same engine – it's also the only 70hp four-stroke. As most of the competitors are 75hp and the Odin is currently rated to carry a maximum of 70hp, the builder is hoping to have the rating increased in the near future. But whatever the pros and cons of the different engines, the Johnson proved to be quiet and smooth-running, powering the boat through the turns without cavitation or any reduction in revs.

When the time came to sail, we let the boat stop, opened the valves to fill the ballast tank, lowered the centreplate and rudders, and raised the engine. Once the tank was full – about five minutes later – we set the sails and continued at a more relaxed pace in 8 to 10 knots of breeze.

As with the Mac, sailing an Odin will be for the enjoyment of being out on the water rather than for the sensory pleasure of handling a thoroughbred. You can't forget that it's 50% motorboat and, when



Under sail and for manoeuvring under power, the rudders are lowered and allowed to fill with water. They're hauled up for high-speed motoring, but stay connected to the engine

you consider that the wheel is turning two rudders and an engine, it's no surprise that the helm feels lifeless.

On the positive side, we achieved speeds of between 3.5 and 3.9 knots to windward and tacked through 90°. It would have been an unremarkable set of figures for a conventional 27-footer, but was reasonable for a hybrid even allowing for conditions that showed the boat off to best advantage: flat water and the right amount of breeze for full sail. Any increase in the wind, though, and the Odin would have been over-powered. Our heel angle of about 15 or 20° in the odd fresher spell suggested she's a boat you need to reef early.

Another pleasant surprise was the shape of the sails, especially the mainsail. On the

other hand, it would have been nice to see some more extensive clew reinforcement on the cross-cut genoa. The sail was of such low aspect ratio that the sheet load ran across the bias of the 5oz cloth, causing

DOWN BELOW

Lined and trimmed

The differences between the MacGregor 26X and the Odin are immediately apparent down below. Whereas the Mac is bright, simple and even a little stark, the Poles have lined the hullsides with a soft, quilted fabric and incorporated plenty of trim in light oak. As on deck, you don't have to look far to find imperfections, but the overall effect is of a padded and comfortable environment.

Headroom ranges from 5ft 10in (1.78m) at the after end of the saloon to 5ft 2in (1.57m) over the water ballast tank.

Stowage is adequate for weekenders, though the space under the forward part of the berth in the bow and under the double berth in the stern is filled with polyurethane foam.

A simple galley lives to port by the companionway, with a door on the opposite side opening into the heads compartment. A surprise here is the battery, mounted inside a locker at chest height: a weight like that would best be stowed lower down.

Cleaning is made easy by the full-length interior moulding, while condensation should be kept under control by the foam above the deckhead lining.



With the small wheel offset to starboard, it can be most comfortable to steer by foot



The Odin's mouldings are generally fair, but the non-slip finish could be better

notable distortion at the clew. The sailmaker has since changed the design to alleviate the problem, though Odin have suggested that upgraded sails may well appear on the extras list.

Returning to the performance and handling of the test boat, we accelerated to 4.3 knots with the sheets eased and, as when beating, could leave the boat to sail herself most of the time. Tacking single-handed demanded a little more energy, because of the need to move forward from behind the wheel to tend the Antal 7 winches on the coachroof. The search for a relaxed steering position also led to some of our helmsmen sitting outboard and steering with their feet; the small wheel gives you a limited choice of seats if you want to hold on to it.

Motoring home

Should you decide that you're not sailing fast enough to get home in time for supper, you drop the sails, raise the centreplate and rudder, lower the engine and open the valves in the water tank: the one in the transom to let the water out, and the other one under the forward berth to let the air in. That takes about four minutes. You then need to allow about another eight minutes of motoring to empty the ballast tank and reach full speed.

For the ultimate performance under



The 70hp Johnson four-stroke pushed the test boat along at nearly 17 knots

engine, of course, you would lower the mast. But if you don't want it to come down on its own one day, you will need far more rig tension than we had on our test boat in Italy. Apart from leading to exces-

sive heel and generally poor performance, slack rigging imposes unfair strains on the mast, wire, chainplates and terminals. And while I would be surprised to see many Odin owners beating into more than 15 knots of wind, I'm sure that plenty of them will motor around at planing speeds. By so doing, even on a relatively flat sea, they will be subjecting the rig to snatch loads of immense proportions unless the rigging is wound down tightly enough. The biggest problem will be tensioning the lowers: with the cap shrouds close on one side and the coachroof the other, it's a fiddly job.

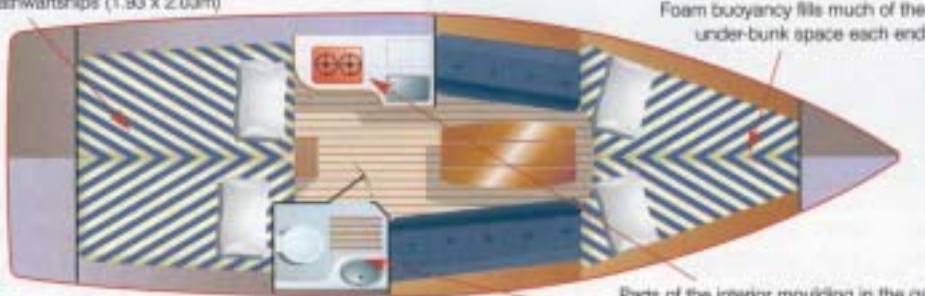
Staying with the rigging, the mast and boom are extruded in Poland, but bear no indication of the maker and are finished in a simple and, in places, rather crude manner. The mast's section and the diameter of the rigging both look on the small side; you have to remember that the Odin's relatively low righting moment means they're not countering the same lateral force as they would on a conventionally ballasted boat. All the same, the chainplates are attached below the decks to chunky-looking tie-bars.

Most of the rest of the hardware comes from well-known companies including Easymarine, Moonlight and Vetus. The genoa tracks run from just abaft the mast to the aftermost end of the coachroof and



The original business of the Odin's creators was home decoration; hence the interior trim

The berth in the stern is 6ft 4in fore-and-aft by 6ft 8in athwartships (1.93 x 2.03m)



Foam buoyancy fills much of the under-bunk space each end

Parts of the interior moulding in the galley and heads are foam cored for rigidity



A spirit cooker avoids the complexity of a gas installation



A chemical toilet is a sensible choice on a trailer-sailer

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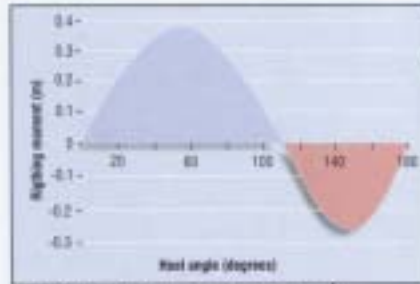
ODIN 820 SPECIFICATION

LOA	26ft 11in (8.20m)
LWL	24ft 11in (7.60m)
Beam	8ft 2.5in (2.50m)
Draft - centreboard up	1ft 0in (0.31m)
- centreboard down	4ft 9in (1.45m)
Displ. (including water ballast)	4,875lb (2,211kg)
Ballast - lead	110lb (50kg)
- water	1,710lb (776kg)
Sail area	306sq ft (28.5sq m)
(main & 100% foretriangle)	
Engine	outboard, 10 to 70hp
Headroom	5ft 10in (1.78m)
Designer	Odin Yachten/ Odin Yachten Polska
Builder	Odin Yachten

Distributor: Wittney Marine Sales, Unit 17, Haddenham Business Park, Thame Road, Haddenham, Bucks, HP17 8LJ. Tel: 01844 290690. Fax: 01844 292431 Email: marine-sales@wittneymachinery.com

CONSTRUCTION Odin hulls are laid up with a solid laminate incorporating a blue, moulded-in boot top. A plastic fender covers the join between the hull and coachroof mouldings.

The centreplate is raised by a line led back over the deck. It hinges on a bolt that can be reached below the table.



The GZ curve shows a vanishing angle of 110° and the maximum righting moment at 55°

Knuckles in the topsides deflect spray and add rigidity

Water flows into the hollow rudder blades to keep them down

The centreplate is ballasted with 110lb (50kg) of lead

A 29ft 6in (9m) mast is an option. The standard mast is 28ft (8.5m)

provide welcome support underfoot if, as I found easiest, you move forward over the top rather than shuffle along the narrow sidedecks. Without the tracks, life would be interesting: the diamond non-slip pattern is neat but not particularly effective.

Once at the bow, you find an anchor well, a couple of cleats and what appears to be the standard Polish arrangement for attaching the forestay to the stemhead fitting while leaving the mast-lowering tackle connected. The only significant omission is an anchor roller. Mounted on the end of a short bowsprit, it appears on the extras list for £470.

Other extras include the engine, battery, trailer, compass, fairleads, genoa and roller reefing gear (a hank-on jib comes as standard), and slab reefing for the mainsail. Your £21,000 or so (including VAT) buys a fairly basic package. John Wittney says his customers are typically spending about £35,000. When you consider that a Suzuki 70hp four-stroke outboard and the four-wheeled trailer between them account for nearly £8,500, it's easy to see where the money goes.

Weighty matters

Although the Odin costs more than the MacGregor, she couldn't be described as an expensive boat. She needs a bigger engine because of her greater size and weight – the Mac is rated for 50hp – and, possibly, a bigger tow car. In Sweden, a further consid-



Sidedecks are usable but narrow. It's often easier to move forward over the top

eration is the need for the equivalent of an HGV licence before you can drive legally with something of the Odin's weight behind you.

For your extra cash, you get a boat that, despite clearly being built to a price, feels

more solid than her American rival and comes with a higher level of trim and interior finish. That was the consensus among the dealers I met; not surprisingly, you might say, though most of them started by selling Macs and are in a good position to make comparisons. Some have now switched allegiance and others currently have a foot in both camps.

Additional features on the Odin include cockpit lockers each side. There's room for a pair of 22-litre petrol tanks in a separate compartment that opens from the stern, though switching the fuel lead from one to the other out at sea could be an interesting exercise. As an alternative, you can have a 40-litre tank with a deck filler. It would be handier for filling up at the quayside, but less convenient if you want to take advantage of cheaper petrol at a garage. Another option is a 45-litre tank built in abaft the double berth, which would keep the weight lower down for better stability.

To what extent the German-Polish newcomer will affect sales of the MacGregor is hard to tell at this stage. But whichever boat you prefer, it's important not to judge sailing as a sport by the performance of a power-sailing hybrid. Plenty of newcomers are attracted to the concept and may never appreciate the fun that sailing can be in a boat that doesn't have to fulfil dual roles. Like the MacGregor, the Odin is a compromise. Like the MacGregor, she's also one that looks destined to succeed.