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FEATURE

- Advanced Yachts -

PERFORMANCE AND COMFORT

WITH A COMBINATION OF RACING/CRUISING AND INTERIORS OF A VERY HIGH DESIGN STANDARD, ADVANCED YACHTS IS GROWING WITH NEW MODELS AND CLIENTS - INCLUDING THE FIRST OWNER FROM ASIA. *By Angelo Colombo*





AN ITALIAN BOATYARD specialising in high-tech sailboats, Advanced Yachts is a young Milan-based company with a lot of experienced people involved as owners, managers and in the technical department. Within a month of viewing its latest hi-tech wonders during the Cannes Yachting Festival, I toured the new A44 with Antonella di Leo, Vice-president and Marketing Director of Advanced Yachts.

The A44 is the smallest in the Advanced Yachts' range, which includes the A60 and A66 with the A80 next to be presented to the market. All are very modern cruising/racing sailboats, built using a high-tech construction process and high-quality components.

Advanced Yachts sailboats feature weight control, rigidity, power and easy handling, but at the same time the interiors are warm, comfortable and perfect for long cruises. This combination has been seen on other recent boats in the same size range, but what is quite different with Advanced Yachts is the level of this combination. They are very high-performance yachts with interiors and layouts created to be the perfect solution for long-range cruising, yet everything can be personalised as a custom yacht.

The builder allows owners to choose any kind of configuration for the interior layout, colours, number of cabins, type of furnishings and fabrics. This concept is not only for the bigger A80, but also for the new 44 designed by Nauta Design with the naval architecture by Roberto Biscontini – a guru of high-performance sailing yachts projects thanks to his long experience in America's Cup starting from 1989 with Moro di Venezia, then with Pact95 Team, Young America BMW Oracle Racing, Luna Rossa and Team New Zealand. He also recently designed Volvo Open 70s with Camper Emirates Team New Zealand.

The power under sail of the Advanced Yachts is quite noticeable when looking at the sail plan and the appendages, especially if you know the minds behind these elements. According to Di Leo, from the first project the idea was to create a really fast performance yacht with the capabilities of a typical cruiser, an advanced new kind of boat dedicated to people who love to race and cruise fast without limiting performance and comfort.

To do this requires a perfect combination of technical skills and knowledge, which is why the company is owned by experienced sailors who work with top industry professionals to create the Advanced Yachts line – including Pedol of Nauta Design and Biscontini for the A44, Reichel-Pugh and Nauta Design for the A80 and A66, and Felci Yacht Design and Nauta Design for the A60.

Di Leo kindly took some time to answer a few questions about her company.



Roberto Biscontini



WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO ESTABLISH ADVANCED YACHTS?

Well, my husband and I are long-time experienced sailors who like cruising and regattas. We also have a lot of friends involved in the boating business. For example my husband studied with Mario Pedol, owner of Nauta Design, but over time we got to know a lot of people. In the meantime, every day we had more clear ideas about the perfect boat we wanted to sail.

So our boat had to be comfortable in terms of space and furniture, for example, but the main goal is performance.

For family reasons we had to move from Milan to a place close to the sea, so we chose Monte Carlo. We own a company specialising in financial services and analysis for more than 25 years, and we also have a real estate business and an editorial company. When we moved close to the sea, we decided to do what we'd been talking about for a long time, start constructing the perfect boat – well, what we wanted as the perfect boat.

We talked with Mario Pedol and he told us to think about doing something else, saying "enjoy sailing and forget about starting a new boatyard". The timing wasn't the best – the global financial crisis was starting, but we decided to start studying deeply the project and concept for a really new advanced yacht.

What we immediately understood was that our mission had to start with the production of a perfect quality yacht, something able to define new standards and in the meantime offer owners the opportunity to win regattas and enjoy long cruises.

HOW DID THE MARKET PERCEIVE THE FIRST BOAT?

At the 2010 Genoa Boat Show we presented the first boat from Advanced Yachts, the 66-footer that was in production with three boats already at sea. I remember that a lot of people started to visit our boat and take notes about some original solutions. They were really interested

to know more about who we are and started talking with us. Some of them became our customers. The first boats were very important for us to see if our idea was right or not. Most people don't expect such a luxurious interior in a performance yacht.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE ASIAN MARKET?

Actually Asia is very important and the A80 we will show at the next Cannes Yachting Festival is owned by a gentleman from the Far East. We have received some interest from the area also for other boats, the A60 and the A66, but every time the potential client disappeared. So when the client for the A80 started to ask us for information on the A66, we were thinking that probably we had another gentleman interested to know about our products but nothing more.

When he visited us and was talking about space, performance and so on he said: "I want something like that, but bigger than this." We understood that probably something was different from the past, so we presented him with the A80 we were already working on and he appreciated it immediately and we started construction. On this yacht the superstructure will be totally in carbon. We use carbon on all our boats to make the light structure and rigid hull.

WAS THE FINANCIAL CRISIS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU?

Yes sure, because with the global financial crisis many professionals had time to spend with new projects. I'm talking about the best professionals on this business. So the crisis represented an opportunity for us to talk and make projects with some of our favourite designers, engineers, and technicians that are now working with us in our factory in Fano on the Adriatic Sea.

THE A44 IS A VERY INTERESTING PROJECT, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE SMALLEST YACHT IN THE LINE?

Actually I can say that the new 44 is the smallest and it will remain the smallest built by Advanced Yachts. We need to offer a boat of this size because some potential clients ask us to do something in that size, but on the smallest boats our approach is not the right one. We choose the best designer and engineer, the best materials... everything is the best on the market from the smallest element on board to the mast and the sails. On big boats we have the opportunity to identify the right price, because any boat is close to being a one-off. On the A44 we apply the same semi-custom philosophy as the A60 and A66.

Our clients can choose whatever they want except to modify the structural parts. On a small boat you can't do it; the price becomes too high compared with any kind of serial production, and we want remain a tailor-made sailing boatyard. On the A60 we offer two different superstructure options, the flush deck or semi-raised. The owner's suite of the A80 can be at the bow or at the stern, so the owner can choose many different solutions for each yacht.



For us each owner, whether aboard the A44 or A80, is an Advanced Yachts owner. So he or she will expect the maximum in terms of quality and attention to detail, as well as high standards for systems and solutions for a good life on board. That's the reason we cannot go under this size – that's the limit in terms of dimensions to do something so sophisticated. We talk a lot with the client before we start producing the yacht. We need to understand the best solution for each owner, because Advanced Yachts must fit the owner's needs in every way.

WHO ARE YOUR MAIN COMPETITORS?

Well, in the beginning we analysed Swan and Baltic because of their high quality. We worked hard from the start to obtain the best quality and now we are convinced that we are following our mission. We are proud of our results and our clients confirm that we are doing the right job.

We can follow any owner not only during the construction process but also afterwards, during the yacht's life. For example we can take care of the maintenance programmes, find a crew for a regatta, transfer the yacht to take part of an event, and so on. We have a lot of services connected with our boats because first of all as company owners we are sailors and we know what a sailor needs. A perfect boat is a starting

point, after that services are something that represent the difference.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO BE AN ITALIAN SHIPYARD WHEN YOU TALK WITH FOREIGN CUSTOMERS?

It is still very important because they like our way of creating beauty, our ability to make something new starting with a simple idea, and also the quality we offer. In Italy we have a high degree of excellence in the marine industry. I'm talking about designers and engineers, but also companies able to realise a masterpiece in every specific part of a yacht, from the electronics to the mechanical systems. I think that all over the world, people and especially sailors recognise in Italy that we are every day involved in finding new solutions, new ideas. I'm proud to be part of the Italian yachting industry, and I think that every one of us has to be.

ANY THOUGHTS ABOUT MAKING BIGGER MODELS IN FUTURE?

Well, when began discussing the A80 we met a client who wanted us to start studying a solution for a 100ft and a short time later another asked about a 90ft. We are working on these projects and are confident about the future.

www.advancedyachts.it