

SAILING WORLD

BOAT
OF THE
YEAR
2025



VX TWO
NOMINEE



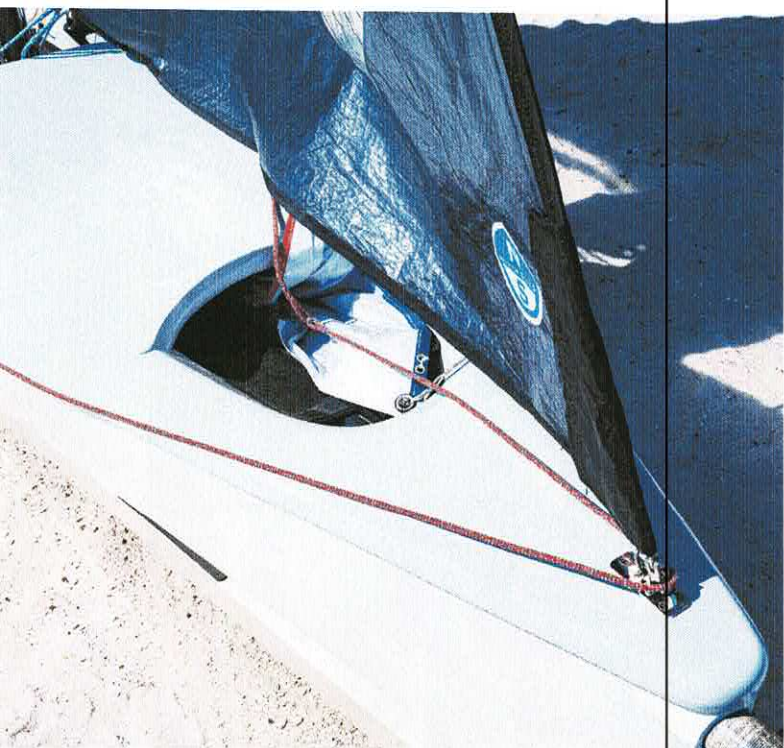


The VX Two, a special delivery from Mackay Boats in New Zealand, is a 200-pound double-handed skiff dinghy that is designed to plane. BOTY judges Mike Ingham (at helm) and Erik Shampain praised the boat's all-around performance and highly refined control systems.

Europe, Peters is confident that US class racing is not far behind. He has imported a half-dozen boats, with a vision for a one-design circuit soon. The boat is currently available in a Fun version for \$24,000 and a Race version for \$25,000, but the next batch, Peters says, will have price increases.

VX Two: The Big-Kid Skiff

With the BirdyFish resting its dolly on the sands of SkyBeach,



we watch the bay glass-off and head to a beachside thatch hut for shade. Up next is the VX Two, described as a 15-foot doublehanded hiking skiff. Without any breeze, we are not rushing to go sailing. This beauty demands a big breeze.

While we wait for the sea breeze to kick in, the VX Two's new US distributor, Ed Furry, soon gives us the low-down. This boat is built by Mackay Boats in New Zealand, which also builds Olympic 470s, 29ers, 49ers and a list of other high-performance class hulls, and as expected, the VX Two is one sharp-looking vessel. The hull itself is identical to Mackay's VX Evo hull, but the deck is all VX Two, configured for an intermediate doublehanded

skiff team.

"It's a simple boat to sail, but that doesn't mean it's easy to sail," Furry says. "It's easy to sail and race, but it will require a bit more of a technical sailor. For someone coming out of junior sailing, it will be a little sportier—it's a fast little boat."

Simple and slick are the first words that come to mind as Furry tours us through the boat. High-level development and tweaking of the systems by the engineers at Mackay

before launching this boat into the world has produced a stunner. It's as if all the temptations to over-tech and complicate it were intentionally avoided. From the transom to the bow and the spliced lines to minimalist hardware, there's nothing superfluous about it. That's the sort of obsessiveness to detail that gets them to 209 pounds all-up.

The flip-up rudder has a quick-release skewer, and the daggerboard slots flush into the trunk. To note, the foils are super-high-aspect specimens with razor-sharp edges and pointy tips that will need the tender loving care they deserve.

The mainsheet comes straight off the boom skiff-style, which really opens up the

cockpit and puts the sail load at hand. An experienced forward crew will appreciate floating-jib leads and the smooth-running halyard purchases at the mast for quick and dynamic mode changes, as well as the curved carbon jib-cleat brackets that don't have any hard edges. The spinnaker is a single-line launch-and-retrieval system for a high-clew kite that's pulled through a large throat in the foredeck and into a sock on the cockpit floor. The rig is a tapered one-piece carbon extrusion, but future rigs will be two-part, Furry says.

Like the BirdyFish, the VX Two's simplicity doesn't require much of a briefing, so 30 minutes later, with diamonds on the bay, Ingham and Shampain kick off their session in a 10-knot afternoon sea breeze. We give full-throttle chase in the RIB as they tear off across Tampa Bay. With the kite lifting the bow and the judges leaning aft, they're easily pegging double digits on the boat's Vakaros unit.

"We hit 13.7, and it was really easy to get there," Shampain says. "And it isn't hairy at all when you do get there. The kite is a small skiff design with a narrow clew box, like on the 49er and 29er, so it's really easy to trim and pull around the zippered jib luff through jibes. Two big pulls on the sheet, and it's through."

What impresses Ingham the most is the feel on the helm. "It's almost crazy-responsive both upwind and downwind," he says. "And the boat is also really responsive to crew-weight movements. It's a boat where you're going to be really active and moving a lot, but it also has a decent amount of stability. Yes, it's a skiff, but it feels much more like a big dinghy."

"It's super-efficient" is Shampain's immediate assessment after sailing. "Everything runs so smoothly; there's no friction anywhere. The sails are perfect, with a nice-looking main and the battens on the jib. At first, I thought the kite would be too small and flat, but it was really good for planing."

What stands out most about the VX Two for Shampain,

Thorough development of the VX Two, from its fine appendages to its slick rigging systems and balanced sail plan, results in a lively boat that's high-performance and fun to sail. For the quality of the package, the judges say, its \$30,000 all-up quoted price tag is a bonus.

however, is the build quality and detailing. "It's beautifully finished—elegant with the joins and the rounded corners—and the ergonomics were great. In the tacks, when I was forward, I wasn't stumbling on the kite bag, and it was easy to get straight to the hiking strap."

For Ingham, the angled contours of the cockpit tanks are comfortable for hiking. "It fits my body well, the straps are in the right place, and there aren't any pressure points on the back of my legs."

Both judges agree that the boat delivers next-level skiff-style dinghy sailing, so it will require some getting used to, but it's the sort of boat you'll be frothing to rig when the breeze is on. "You will get wet, but this boat will be forgiving at high speeds," Shampain says.

In the event of a capsize, righting lines run beneath rails, but in our capsize test, Shampain, at only 145 pounds, went straight to the daggerboard and righted the boat himself, scooping me (at 185 pounds dry) in it, holding on to the hiking strap. Easy.

The boat, as sailed, is priced at \$26,000, which the judges find surprising given the quality of the boat and its performance. It is perhaps the price—the dollar-for-speed—that has Shampain pondering which of the fantastic four is most worthy of a Boat of the Year title. We'll find out this fall; in the months ahead, we have many more boats to consider. For now, it's in the running, but all four delivered excellence. ■

Editor's note: For additional details, photos and videos from our tests of these and future Boat of the Year nominees, visit sailingworld.com/BOTY