

Argonauts would love her - VAL, Slovenian nautical magazine

VAL, slovenian nautical magazine - web page

The new Slovenian sailing boat called Argo 680, which was first introduced at Izola's selling fair, will fill a gap in the small sailing boat market not only in Slovenia, but also in markets abroad.

Architects and designers frequently forget about "smaller" sailing boats, with the exception of France. That's why the new boat is a very welcome design.

Our co-worker Božidar Peteh carefully monitored the project from the beginning, so the final look of the prototype presented in Izola was probably not a big surprise for Val readers. The greatest surprise for some people was probably quality workmanship, her grand shape and adequate equipment, which is very simple, but well integrated into all right places in the boat. Since we knew the boat, all that was left was sailing with her...

It happened in December...



Before we put out to sea, we had seen another boat in Horjul, where she had been getting her final looks. The boat was perfect in comparison with the first one, but I shall get back to this a bit later.

In Koper we were greeted by cloudy weather, gentle breeze and patches of fog above the sea. There was no forecasted north wind yet. Despite all that, we prepared the boat for her first voyage. First we inspected her and took some measurements, and then we started our voyage using the engine, but expecting the forecasted wind.

Design and construction

Designer Marko Paš favours modern shapes of sailing boats and latest technological solutions, irrespective of design (a travel or racing boat). Designing Argo 680 he had a lot of creative freedom, but he had to consider purchaser's demand for the boat to be comfortable, easy to handle, but attractive to sail with, i.e. she had to be fast and suitable to sailing conditions in the Mediterranean. She could be made into a sport sailing boat with only a few changes.

So it's not surprising that the whole boat is made in a 'sandwich' kind of way (hull and deck), which makes her a lighter. That is not important only for sailing qualities but also for transport. We should not forget that Argo 680 can be transported to the water where we want to sail by a medium sized car. During the transport the retractable centreboard, which minimizes the drag to only 35 cm, is not in the way. This is not an advantage only for transport but also when the boat is anchored. Only one and a half meter of water beneath the centreboard is enough and the bay you chose is all yours.

Rigidity of the hull, caused by the sandwich type of construction, is reinforced by some extra items - inner casts of beds which are glued onto the hull. There are four cross sections, one in front under the mast, a stern one, which separates the living part from the storage room and two smaller cross-sections supporting the cockpit.

The hull and deck are glued together with epoxy glue and fastened with screws, which assures required firmness.

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Deck



It is quite predictable that owners of such size of a boat will normally sail in perfect sailing conditions and mostly in warm months, so the designer concentrated on the design of the deck, where a crew normally spends most of the time. It's not surprising that the cockpit is 239 cm long and the stern part is 141 cm wide. The stern width was emphasised, as according to modern trends, cockpit does not have benches along the whole length (they are 116 cm long and 37 cm wide), but only along half of the length.

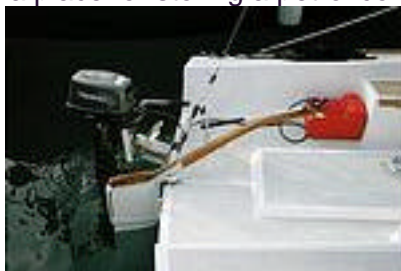
The stern part is therefore designed for a helmsman and the part of the crew that takes an active part during the sailing, especially during regattas. There is more than enough space for four members of a crew on the benches, but while sailing around a bay during the day the cockpit itself provides enough space for six people. Well, Argo 680 is suitable for a crew, not larger than 2+2, meaning 2 young couples or one young couple with one or two kids.



The right bench has a cover and underneath it is a storage room.

However, there is no storage under the left bench, because underneath it there is a cooking part of the boat, when it is not in use. This is not the only storage part in the cockpit. A part of the floor is removable and there is a large storage space underneath, where owner can put a lot of necessary things needed during sailing. The edge of the floor-cover can be used as a support for legs of sailors when the boat is leans on the side. The box is also a part of the inner reinforcement of the hull respectively the cockpit.

On the transom of the stern, if a term 'stern' can actually be used with these modern (opened) sailing boats, there is a helm, which is designed in a way that allows us to remove the rudder blade from the frame. It is important for transport as well as for anchoring in shallow waters. There is also a bearer for outer-stern propeller-engine. The only thing missing is a place for storing a petrol container, but it could be found in the cockpits - two



additional doors could be made into the wall. The space would be big enough and it couldn't be reached from the inside.

A passage on the deck, which leads to the stem, is wide enough so the boat does not lean from side to side too much while walking around, despite the fact that the centreboard is up and the stability of the boat is weaken. It is obvious that the hull is wide enough on the water line, and it improves the boat's stability, which is important for sailing.

The deck is not equipped with classical aluminium edges but with teak-wood decorations.

There are three small columns on each side of the boat leading a knitted rope towards stem and stern. There it is hooked onto the edge of the boat and not onto the pulpit or pushpin as they do not exist. Such solution is suitable for committee boats and not so much for travel boats, but just before the end of the edition it was found out that a little fence and a column were going to be added to the stern.

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Interior



When entering the boat we use the stairs, which can be removed when not used. Then we sit (it is necessary as the interior is only 126 to 130 cm high) on one of the two beds, which are the main part of the interior. On the right there is a 197 cm long bed located between the main cross-section and the stern cross-section, which separates it from the storage room reachable from the cockpit. On the left there is a bit shorter bed, which



is only 184 cm long, as there is a cooking area under the cockpit. The kitchen can be pulled out towards the middle (but pillows should be removed beforehand) and set ready for usage. There are no cupboards and drawers inside, but there are two shelves behind the padded benches. There is a lot of storage space for clothes and stuff under the beds. Including the front ones, which are very comfortable with the length of 197cm. Therefore there is enough space for four people in the boat (width of the beds is not less than 55 cm).

Movement and sitting are slightly obstructed by the centreboard case, which can be used as a support for a retractable table. Commendatory, the table is designed to be taken into the cockpit and put into the wall of the cockpit.



Interior flanks of the boat are upholstered in bright artificial leather, the ceiling is a plastic cast, and thanks to the three windows that open and two that do not, interior is very bright. There are also a lot of places to put things in. Also space under the anchor in the front cockpit can be used, as well as 70 cm behind stair that leads into the cockpit. In the second boat there was already a box for things there.

The cooking part consists of a two-spirit cooker, a sink and some drawers. Interior is going to be furnished with two additional lights. Therefore a battery will be placed near the cooking part of the boat.

Sailing



The sailing test started with 9, 9 horse powered outer-stern Tohatsu in the main role. With more than enough power on the stern, we needed only 35 min from Koper to Izola port, and we were convinced that a 4 or 5 horse powered engine is enough for Argo 680.

Cloudy and foggy weather was not promising stronger winds so we had to use the few breezes we had and we sailed to the open sea. 3 to 4 knots of unsteady wind flow was not enough for a valid grade, but we can say that Argo 680 reached a sailing speed of 3, 7 to 4, 2 knots into the wind, which is really a lot in such conditions. We hurried with improvised setting of the spinnaker and the crew managed to reach the speed of 5, 2 knots in the most

ideal sailing corner. The test was coming to an end at the time of sunset, but the boat had to be taken back to Koper.



The director of Argo Janez Grdadolnik, who was getting ready to set the outer-stern engine, and I wanted to take it back, but just then the forecasted north wind started to blow from the distance and reached us in a few minutes. The engine stayed in the cabin and we sailed with full sailing against the wind and Koper. We were lucky, as this experience gave us the chance to learn about sailing potentials of the boat in the real wind. We weren't sailing straight into the wind and into the waves, so we didn't »bang« them, as it would be expected because of the wide and flat hull. It's true that we were carried away from the wind but it was really cold (dark, 4 degrees, 3 bofors of wind) and working with sails is a lot harder with cold fingers. However, Argo 680 proved successful with fast sailing, which exceeded her theoretical speed, so the engine was not used on the way back. Later on, when the wind got stronger, we took down the sails and used Tohatsu, which drove us out of and in the Koper port.

Conclusion



The ambitious project showed its value already with the prototype, quality workmanship and equipment. There are a few things that need to be improved regarding sailing and living conditions on the boat (traveller, fences, a place for a tank container) and things that need to be added (jib boom, spinnaker equipment, battery, proper lights). But these are minor things which do not affect the whole impression. With an adequate price, Argo 680 will be very competitive with imported brands of this kind. With some improvements it can be really successful in regattas. And talking about the subject: a Slovenian monotype would be very welcome - so why not Argo 680!