



# Atao

In the northern hemisphere, any invitation to go sailing in late December should be declined if possible, so it was a near-surreal experience to be weaving upwind in blinding sunshine through fishing pots off Concarneau, Brittany, on the 24.9 metre *Atao*, the exceptional new JFA 82 Classic, just four days before Christmas. For the team from JFA Chantier Naval, this was a final opportunity to sail and enjoy the boat before she leaves for the Caribbean after two and a half years in build – an intensive project that successfully marries performance with a showcase for craftsmanship.

There is a current surge in building modern classics, and the advantages for an owner are numerous. An obvious, visual reward is the overall style and good looks of a classic design template that almost always succeeds. When this is merged with a fresh approach to overall function and astonishing sailing performance, the concept is unbeatable. While *Atao* attracts admiring and envious looks when alongside a pontoon, she is not merely a pretty reproduction, and when sailed by a crew determined to squeeze every available knot from her, the result is exhilarating.

This JFA 82 Classic looks beguilingly beautiful and traditional, but her finely crafted woodwork hides many powerful innovations, as Oliver Dewar discovers.

Photography: interiors  
Bill Muncke, exteriors  
B Stichelbaut



The helm controls a yacht that displaces 48 tonnes and has remarkable speed and agility

Drawn by Barracuda Yacht Design in Madrid, *Atao* benefits from the expertise of Iñigo Toledo, currently technical co-ordinator for Desafío Español, the Spanish America's Cup team, and a man with a mission to optimise performance afloat. 'Our goal was to design a classic-looking boat without compromising modern requirements,' he says, 'so we made the profile with long, classic overhangs and an elegant, sweeping sheerline.' At 6.1 metres, the relatively narrow beam was dictated by speed requirements, he explains. 'Many owners want to maximise a yacht's internal volume but we managed to keep *Atao* from being too beamy and this contributes to her performance.'

In 15 knots of breeze, with a fully battened Spectra mainsail and Spectra genoa from Incidences, *Atao* was powerful and unstressed at a true wind angle of 60 degrees, delivering 10 knots boatspeed, with water streaming over the bulwarks in the occasional chilly winter gusts. As the breeze climbed to 19 knots, the genoa was swapped for a surprisingly tall Vectran staysail and speed was maintained without missing a beat. The yacht displaces 48 tonnes and her speed and agility are



Above: designed to provide the maximum storage space, including a small navigation station (below), the deckhouse is the social heart of the boat

impressive. In the words of her skipper, Josselin Guille: 'Not bad for a heavy lady.'

However, it is below the waterline that Toledo's knowledge is most effective, and the yacht's 2.5 metre aluminium rudder is a key component. 'In a boat like this, a lot of the weight is in the engine room and this affects the balance of the boat,' he says. 'On *Atao*, the engine is positioned slightly aft of centre. To balance this you could fit ballast forward, but to limit the weight we designed the rudder to compensate and improve manoeuvrability.' This works and she offers the helming characteristics of a nimble 18 metre boat.

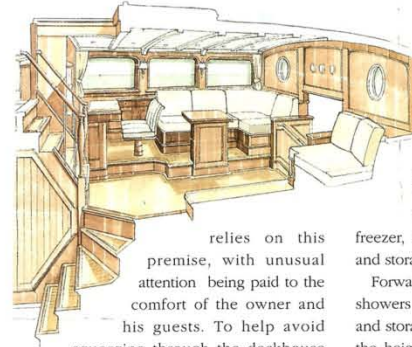
Barracuda Yacht Designs also customised *Atao's* keel arrangement, allowing her to outperform similar yachts. The secret is a composite daggerboard within the keel (see panel on page 70) which, once deployed, increases the shallow draught from 2.6 to 4 metres and transforms upwind capability. 'Most cruising yachts suffer from leeway, but

the daggerboard gives an extra 3 to 4 degrees of true wind angle when sailing upwind,' says Toledo. 'While most boats may require a couple of tacks to get into port, *Atao* will need just one.' This efficiency will prove invaluable when the yacht takes part in Spirit of Tradition classes in Caribbean and Mediterranean regattas this year.

Pierre-Jacques Kubis, JFA's project manager for *Atao*, who is immensely proud of the



yacht, explains the thinking behind the design process and the owner's choice of a modern classic: 'His previous boat was an Oyster and the internal layout has some similarities but our job was to deliver an efficient sail yacht in the spirit of the classics and give the owner the pleasure of sailing a thoroughbred. The choice of building at JFA was clinched when the owner spotted the 21 metre modern classic *Aldebaran* in the yard's facility Concarneau. While the family resemblance between *Atao* and her smaller, older sister *Aldebaran* is undeniable, the new JFA Classic is an example of successful design evolution. The starting point was the deckhouse, explains Kubis: 'This is the most important space on the boat and *Atao* was designed around this feature.' The view from the deckhouse is unparalleled and uninterrupted, forward across the decks and into the cockpit, and this is clearly the social heart of the yacht. Much of the internal lay-



out relies on this premise, with unusual attention being paid to the comfort of the owner and his guests. To help avoid squeezing through the deckhouse and disturbing those inside, visitors can access the saloon down a curved staircase and through the twin-bunked starboard cabin that is usually reserved for the owner's grandchildren. Crew working in the galley can access the deck through a hatch directly port of the deckhouse. This opening is designed to facilitate work in the engine room when in port but allows the crew increased mobility when entertaining eight charter guests.

Accommodation is similarly well planned, with direct access from the owner's cabin to the deckhouse up the curved staircase or forward through the twin-bunked cabin, which doubles as a pilot berth for the owner on long passages. A neat draining cupboard for foul

weather gear at the bottom of the staircase prevents seawater from being trailed and dripped through the boat. One of the most striking technical features of the saloon is the central compartment that contains the daggerboard mechanism. This unobtrusive cupboard houses the fin's hydraulics along with a freezer, a refrigerator, a flat-screen television and storage for plates.

Forward of the mast, the guest cabins with showers have almost identical internal space and storage, although the starboard option has the heightened appeal of a shower below a large skylight. The twin-berthed crew cabin with shower in the bow is in identical style and materials to the guest accommodation. It is this style, choice of materials and level of detail that shapes the atmosphere above and below deck. Dick Young Designs has created an interior in French cherrywood panels with teak veneer flooring that flows through *Atao* in soft curves, linking all areas seamlessly. Again, behind the genteel exterior, high-tech design is at work: the furniture is cherrywood veneer with a honeycomb core providing strength while saving weight, and the floor panels 'float' on a rubber mat, eliminating vibration.

Dick Young describes the challenges the project presented: 'On *Atao* we experimented

Fit for purpose



Formed in 1993, JFA Chantier Naval in Concarneau, southern Brittany, is a well-oiled operation that can call on considerable technical support locally. Forty craftsmen are employed on site and a further eight staff run the office. A separate building houses four offices, a meeting room and storage for projects in progress, which allows crew and associated technicians of a yacht to set up a base. 'The offices keep us in close contact with crew,' says the company's head Frédéric Jaouen. 'They can operate autonomously but are still connected to the yard and there is a good flow of information between projects and JFA.' The yard handled every aspect of the *Atao* project other than painting and electronics, but Jaouen plans to have complete involvement in future projects, concentrating on yachts between 22 and 50 metres. A dominant feature of the yard is the massive syncrolift, which is capable of lifting 2,000 tonnes on to railway tracks for transfer to the main shed.



Top left: a drawing for the deckhouse by Dick Young Designs. Above: the main saloon, with its starboard dining area and galley, includes a clever central cabinet (above right) that houses the yacht's daggerboard mechanism as well as a freezer, refrigerator and television

## Atao

with things, balancing different proportions, their function and appearance.' The yacht's slim beam demanded a classic feel without sacrificing or scaling down the dimensions of any features: 'We avoided producing skinny mouldings to fit the space available, and we used a lot of louvres as there is more painted material than usual.' The saloon's daggerboard housing is a prime example of maximising storage, and this characteristic appears throughout the yacht. 'It's a Chinese puzzle – there is no wasted space on board.'

Attention to detail and technology continues on deck. The foredeck opens and the anchor is hydraulically lifted clear of the bulwarks over a highly varnished rail and lowered clear of the bows. The complex system includes a built-in seawater hose to clean mud from the chain and anchor before stowing. In the stern, further hydraulic marvels unfold and rotate the aft deck and transom, silently and smoothly providing a bathing platform complete with freshwater shower and retractable cleats for the tender. Less obvious, intriguing features abound: the teak deck at the base of the skylights is raised in a radius to prevent water collecting at a join that is a traditional point of ingress on classic yachts. A corresponding camber in the teak deck near the scuppers encourages water to drain swiftly through customised stainless-steel drain covers shaped in the 'ermine' symbol of the Gwenn-ha-Du Breton flag, a device that subtly appears on the yacht's transom.

The Breton word *atao* can be translated as 'go forward', which is certainly a fitting motto for a yacht with classic appeal, modern innovation and potent sailing qualities. □

### A hidden advantage

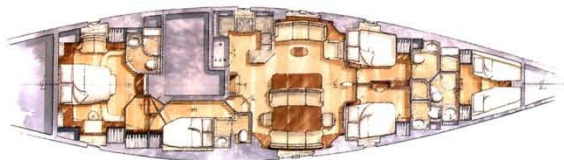
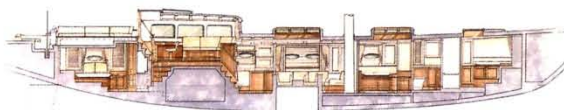
Atao's keel and daggerboard system, by Barracuda Yacht Design, gives her increased sailing height upwind and limits leeway drift. Without the daggerboard, her aluminium keel and 15.5 tonne lead bulb draw 2.55 metres, allowing access to relatively shallow anchorages and harbours. When lowered, the composite daggerboard increases draught to 4 metres. With plans to race in the Spirit of Tradition class this year, her sailing angles will be a formidable asset.



The owner's cabin is next to a twin-bunked children's cabin (right) that doubles as a pilot berth

### ATAO

<b>LOA</b> 24.9m	<b>Fuel capacity</b> 3,040 litres	<b>Tender</b> Avon 4.5m
<b>LWL</b> 19.35m	<b>Range</b> 300 hours	<b>Tender-launching system</b> Custom JFA davits
<b>Beam</b> 6.1m	<b>Bow thruster</b> MaxPower	<b>Passerelle</b> Opacmare
<b>Draught</b> 2.55m/4m	<b>Stabilisers</b> n/a	<b>Paint</b> Awlgrip
<b>Displacement (light)</b> 48 tonnes	<b>Generator</b> Onan 22.5kW	<b>Construction</b> Aluminium
<b>Rig</b> Sloop	<b>Watermakers</b> Idromar, 320 litres per hour	<b>Classification</b> MCA compliant
<b>Mast and boom</b> Lorima, carbon prepreg mast and carbon conoe boom	<b>Freshwater capacity</b> 1,800 litres	<b>Project manager</b> JFA
<b>Sail areas</b> Main 170m <sup>2</sup> , genoa 130m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Security systems</b> Magellen	<b>Naval architect</b> Barracuda Yacht Design (Iñigo Toledo)
<b>Sailmaker</b> Incidences	<b>Monitoring system</b> n/a	<b>Exterior styling</b> JFA/Dick Young Designs
<b>Furling systems</b> Reckman	<b>Air-conditioning</b> Barillec, Tankwatch	<b>Interior designer</b> Dick Young Designs
<b>Winches</b> Lewmar	<b>Communication/navigation electronics</b> B&G, Furuno, Nera, Simrad	<b>Builder/year</b> JFA Chantier Navàl/2006
<b>Engine</b> Mann 270hp	<b>Entertainment systems</b> Sharp	<b>Quai du Seychelles</b> 29900 Concarneau, France
<b>Propeller</b> Gori	<b>Owner and guests</b> 8	<b>Tel: +33 02 98 60 49 48</b>
<b>Speed under power</b> 11 knots	<b>Crew</b> 2	<b>E-mail: jfa@jfa-yachts.com</b>
		<b>Price guide</b> n/a



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