



All photos: J-M Lot

JPK 1080

This unusual-looking French 35-footer is a high-performance yacht that works well fully crewed and short-handed, says Matthew Sheahan

Today, success in the racing keelboat market relies on far more than delivering an exciting-looking boat that goes like a runaway train off the breeze. To win the wallets of owners a new boat has to satisfy three key conditions: first, it must rate well under a popular rating system such as IRC; second, it should have the potential to be a one-design class, ideally with an international following; and third, it should be capable of being raced competitively by both a full crew and short-handed.

Tick all three boxes and as a builder you

▲ **Above: the 1080 is a good example of an appealing and versatile racer, with one-design and short-handed potential**

will have provided three good reasons for potential owners to put your boat at the top of their list. Blathering on about how a boat is as much at home family cruising as it is racing round the cans is no longer a compelling argument. Instead, a boat that is suited to short-handed sailing will often find favour with those who go family sailing anyway.

In this respect, niche French builders such as Pogo Structures, Archambault and others in the Brittany boatbuilding region are hitting the bullseye on a regular basis and adding regatta success to their winning

list as quickly as there are new customers.

Among builders leading the charge is Brest-based JPK. Its first major success was winning its class in the 2007 Rolex Fastnet Race with the JPK 960. But it was its performance in the 2013 Fastnet that launched the company into the spotlight when one of its JPK 1010s, *Night & Day*, sailed double-handed by Pascal Loison and his son Alexis, hit the headlines.

The pair not only won the two-handed class and beat an identical fully crewed boat, but bested the entire 340-boat Fastnet fleet to take overall victory.

The design was no one-trick pony either; various JPK 1010s had already delivered some impressive results round the cans, demonstrating the boat's versatility. This provided a good starting point for the company to work on a slightly bigger boat.



The stepped coachroof windows are much more than a styling detail; they allow more space for the transverse jib car tracks and assist forward visibility from below



The yacht has twin rudders, but a single tiller, which provides more space in the cockpit than twin tillers. A single rudder can be fitted for inshore racing



Rigged here with a symmetrical spinnaker and a conventional pole, although, as you can see, the hull has a moulding for a retractable bowsprit for asymmetrics



The coachroof 'bubble' module provides protection for the companionway area as well as facilitating a good view of the rig and sail plan from below

Designed by Jacques Valer, the first 1080 launched in February 2014 and quickly made an impression, not least for her looks. The angular stepped-in coachroof gave her a distinctive look when viewed from head on. But in detail, along with others, is more than styling; it has practical benefits. Stepping the coachroof inboard allowed more space for the transverse genoa tracks also providing good visibility forward from below," says company founder Jean-Louis Kelbert. "This is especially useful when you're sailing short-handed." The recessed deck also provides a good space of bracing yourself when working on the deck, and an area forward and to leeward for the full crew to huddle in when the breeze goes light. Originally a professional windsurfer with



The foredeck looks straightforward, but the decent-sized toe rails and the coachroof position and proportions make the JPK 1080's deck easy and secure to work



Primary winches are easy to get to without facing leeward and outboard, and there is plenty to brace yourself against when working the secondary winches

PERFORMANCE

European titles in 1988 and 1999 to his name, Kelbert started his business building quality sailboards before moving into keelboats. An enthusiastic and successful short-handed and solo sailor himself – he has regularly participated in short-handed events such as the Transquadra, a transatlantic race for over 40s in which Kelbert won the single-handed class in 2008 – Kelbert was inspired to create a practical and easily worked cockpit layout based on many thousands of miles offshore.

Apart from the large, movable foot chocks – why don't more builders do this? – key control lines such as the coarse and fine-tune mainsheets, the traveller and backstay controls are all placed close to hand for the helmsman. In addition, the mainsheet can be led onto a primary winch on the windward side if required, making it easy to trim the main while helming in any amount of breeze. Other controls can also be reached with ease from the helm.

Yet the clever part is that this has been achieved without compromising the layout when the boat is fully crewed. Keeping the mainsail trimmer and mainsheet system abaft the helmsman is one example.

One of the clearest is her single tiller and twin rudders, perfect for short-handed sailing as the rudders provide surefooted control on long offshore legs. The single tiller allows plenty of space in the cockpit while also making it easier to retain full control through manoeuvres. But this boat goes even further as you can switch between twin rudders and a single blade to achieve more nimble performance round the cans if required.

Another example is the option to fit a robust hood over the companionway, which offers greater protection, along with the ability to look up at sail trim from below decks – the 'bubble' as JPK refers to it.

Under way the JPK 1080 is a powerful yet modest-looking boat. She is light enough to get up into the teens in boat speed in a modest breeze and yet does so without taking a major hammering on her IRC rating.

She has a powerful hull form that keeps the waterline beam to a minimum. Her forward sections carry a decent amount of volume, and her aft sections are beamy and fair with a flat run aft thanks to her aggressive chines. The net result is a hull that generates plenty of righting moment from form stability, particularly useful for short-handed racing when you don't have anyone on the rail.

Kelbert also says that her resin infusion construction technique keeps the weight in the structure to a minimum while creating a robust and stiff hull, which allows more of the weight to be placed in the keel bulb.

As for her sail plan, Kelbert and Valer were keen to keep the fractional rig in order to achieve better and easier control over the

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	10.80m	35ft 5in
LWL	9.40m	30ft 10in
Beam	3.65m	12ft 0in
Draught	2.20m	7ft 3in
Displacement	4,750kg	10,471lb
Ballast	2,150kg	4,739lb
Berth	6	
Sail area:		
Mainsail	40m ²	430ft ²
Genoa	33m ²	355ft ²
Asymmetric spi	120m ²	1,291ft ²
Symmetric spi	105m ²	1,130ft ²
Price ex works ex tax	€132,943 (£99,366)	
Designed by	Jacques Valer	
Built by	JPK Composites	
	www.jpk.fr	



▲ Above: the JPK 1080's tall, high aspect ratio rig has provision for fractional kites to make short-handed sailing easier in strong winds. ▼ Below: the interior is simple, but attractive and effective



fore and aft bend while allowing smaller fractional kites to be flown in stronger breezes, particularly when short-handed.

Below decks she's spacious, simple and open, although not quite as well-finished as her arch competitor the Jeanneau Sun Fast 3600. The 1080 is a touch more basic in finish, although one benefit is a reminder that this boat has no inner liners, with structural members laminated to the hull.

It is still early days for this design, but pedigree is something to note, as is her more recent win in the European Yacht of the Year awards where her ability to tick off the three major boxes saw her nudge ahead of some stiff competition.