

Sailing to big fish adventures



Above: *Offshore Hunter* was created from this second-hand Lagoon 410 sailing catamaran, which Morten Ruud then modified with a completely new hardtop and sail configuration, plus an upper helm station, fishing deck and a cockpit at the end of each hull.

Above centre: *Offshore Hunter* begins to take shape at a shipyard in Greece. Before a new hardtop is put in place over the existing sailing cockpit, a fibreglass fishing deck extension is added between the hulls, and functional gamefishing cockpits are constructed at the tail-end of each hull.

Morten's son Emil releases *Offshore Hunter's* first blue marlin, caught during their visit to Madeira.



Harmattan at Ascension Island. But despite having fished two of the best blue marlin locations in the world, I found myself still unsatisfied. My 50th birthday was on the horizon, and one day I realised that if I was actually going to fish and travel to all the destinations I wanted to, I was going to have to re-think my plan!

The result was a strategy to sell my share of my business, buy a suitable sailing boat and set off around the world. That's when my search for the perfect boat began. Most importantly, it would need the capability to fish all the world's known hotspots, as well as any remote seamounts and as yet undiscovered hotspots that looked tempting on the charts.

CREATING THE PERFECT BOAT

"Of course, the perfect option would have been a new custom build, but my budget did not allow for that. I ended up in Greece, where I found a 2002 Lagoon 410 being used as a charterboat. I'd already looked at several other styles of sailing boats and found this one to be the best suited for a rebuild.

The Lagoon 410 has its engines under the bunks in the aft cabin. While this may not seem the perfect place for an engine, it is the only space on these boats big enough to house suitably sized engines.

The original two 27hp Yanmars with sail drive were replaced with two 110hp Yanmars with straight shafts and a pair of 22-inch 4-blade propellers. This gave me the necessary power and manoeuvrability to chase down and manage the end-game with a wild marlin.

Offshore Hunter may not be a traditional marlin boat, but it is a very good compromise between game fishing effectiveness, long-range cruising ability and minimal running costs. We can back-down at eight knots and spin fast during the end-game. It is a very

economical set up, burning 60 to 70 litres on a normal marlin day while trolling at 7.5 knots. During long-distance cruising at six knots on one engine we burn only 0.6 litres per nautical mile, giving us a range of nearly 1700NM.

A MAJOR RE-BUILD

"There is not much new inside, but outside we have done a lot. The huge fishing platform I added is perfect for stand-up battles, and the aft end of each hull has been customised into a mini-cockpit where the deckie can take the leader. Each mini-cockpit has a transom door for bringing fish aboard and for easy access to the water.

The hardtop was also a major re-fit, replacing the canvas. All sail-handling hardware and lines have been moved to the top of the hardtop, so they are out of the way when fishing. The hardtop also features a second helm, which has proven extremely helpful. From there I have a great view over the fishing platform, and with my Furuno plotter/sounder, VHF radio, throttles and joystick steering through the autopilot I have full control.

All the fibreglass work was done by Englishman Leslie Wood, while I provided the ideas. My office computer had a screensaver photo of the long-range New Zealand gameboat *Ultimate Lady*, and she was an inspiration and a model for my creation.

I've fitted *Offshore Hunter* with a suite of Furuno electronics – and I couldn't be happier. I just love them! On the bridge I have a NavNet TZ Touch 14 multi-function display, while on the hardtop is a NavNet TZ Touch 9 multi-function display, along with radar, CHIRP sounder, AIS, autopilot and wind instrumentation.

BIG-GAME EQUIPMENT

"The fishing platform does not have a chair, but we capably fish stand-up heavy-tackle by leaning against the pedestal-mounted 'rocket-launcher' rodholder. For big marlin we use Shimano Tiagra 80W reels that have been blueprinted to 130 and loaded with 1000m of 60kg line in a combination of braid, Dacron and mono. Attached to Melton 130-unlimited stand-up Bluefin rods, these outfits can stop most of what's out there! Our battle dress is a homemade harness and aluminium gimbal belt that has been based on the Black Magic design, but customised to be wider, deeper and better padded.

With a set of carbon telescopic Rupp outriggers installed, the heavy fishing part of the boat was ready for action.





With a teaser outfit run down the centre, and two stand-up 60kg outfits trolling lures off each outrigger, *Offshore Hunter* searches off Madeira for her first big marlin.

Of course, we also carry a lot of tackle for lighter trolling, jigging and casting, including Shimano Tiagras, Talicas, TLDs and Stella spin reels.

A WORLD OF ADVENTURE

"In July 2015 we set sail from Greece, with the world and many great fishing adventures in front of us.

It was a very slow start for our sailing due to the lack of wind, therefore most of our journey through the Mediterranean was done with the help of the Yanmar diesels. We released a few small bluefin tuna while passing through the Med, the biggest being around 45kg. When we arrived at Gibraltar we caught some more around the 50kg mark. These were nice fish, but not what we were looking for.

Our sights were set on our first marlin, so I set our course for the grander Atlantic blue marlin grounds at the Portuguese archipelago of Madeira, off the north-west coast of Africa.

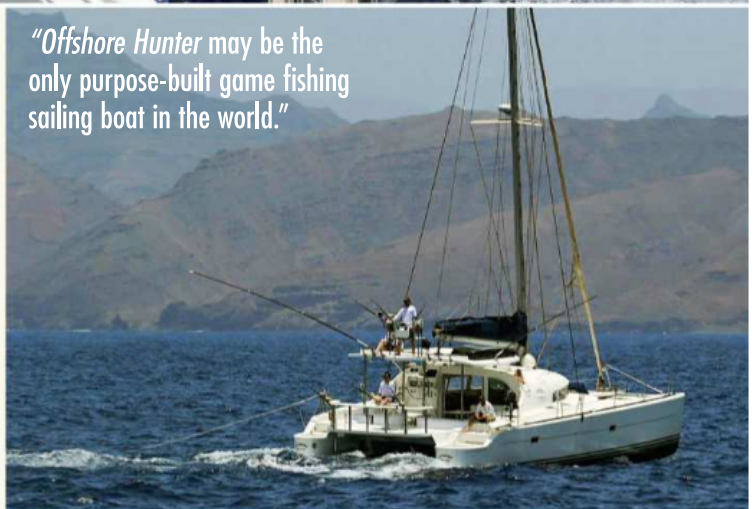
Unfriendly weather made conditions sloppy the day before we reached Madeira, so we paused our journey for a few hours to troll over the Seine seamount. Unfortunately, no blues appeared, but we did release a small white marlin, which gave us our first billfish from the yacht.

MADEIRA

"After a few days sailing, we reached Madeira and joined the rest of the marlin fleet in the beautiful marina at Calheta, where we learnt that the fishing had been rather slow.

While we saw nothing on our first day, by the second we'd managed to raise one and on the third we released a 250kg blue – our first big marlin from the boat! What a great start to our adventure and a nice

"Offshore Hunter may be the only purpose-built game fishing sailing boat in the world."



way to end our stay in Madeira.

That evening we celebrated aboard while sailing into a glorious sunset towards the Canary Islands, a Spanish archipelago off the coast of north-western Africa.

CANARY ISLANDS

After two days under sail we reached La Gomera, the most consistent blue marlin hotspot in the Canaries. We entered the marina in late afternoon, just in time to see the local game fishing fleet arrive after a great day offshore. Most of the boats had caught marlin, the best converting four tags from seven strikes.

We rose early the next morning, ready for more

With a commanding view over the lure spread from his upper helm station, Morten Ruud works the renowned blue marlin grounds off Cape Verde.