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Impression 434 reported very good performance, saying their model provided all their drinking water and showers when required. The Moody 422 *Thor VI* found theirs efficient using 220V, but too power-hungry on 12V, and another Impression 434, *Gilly of London's* PLB failed two weeks in, but they were able to fix it using rewiring instructions e-mailed by Advanced Yacht Services.

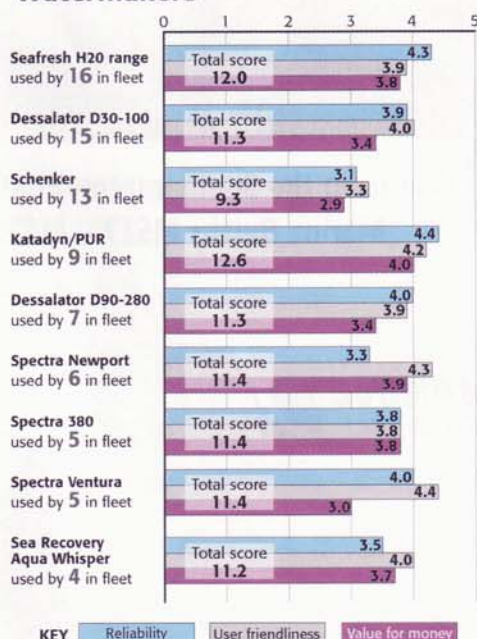
Scores were similar for the larger Dessalators. Peter Turner of *Asolare* said his was perfect, "but we have two on board, a 24V and 220V model, so it's very secure – we made 4.6 tonnes of water, exactly, to the drop. Bosh!"

For the **Sea Recovery Aqua Whisper** models, the Craigs recommended choosing the semi-automatic types, having originally had the automatic model, while a Danish crew didn't rate their newly installed model at all after a host of teething problems.

The advice to take from this would seem to be: make sure you fit your watermaker early, in a position you know it will work without air locks, and test it at heel. Once you are happy that it is functioning properly and you can wash out the pre-filters and service it easily, then the benefits of fresh water will show why it rates as the second most useful gear item on the ARC.

“We have two water makers on board, a 24V and a 220V model, so it's very secure”

## Watermakers



## DOWNWIND SAILS

This was a section we introduced last year, to instant success in terms of interest and performance comments. This year the fleet's use of downwind sails divided up as follows:

Sail type	No carried	Percentage of fleet
Poled-out genoa	110	57 %
Spinnaker gear	63	32 %
Cruising chute	47	24 %
Twin headsails	27	14 %
Parasailor	30	15 %
Headsail only	19	10 %
Twistle rig	3	1.5 %

The figures in the table above (out of 194 responses) were consistent with last year's results for the use of downwind sails. It's important to note that many yachts used a combination of techniques – for instance, as well as their poled-out genoa, *Blonde Moment*, a Hallberg-Rassy 40, also used a cruising chute, spinnaker gear and a parasailor, while *Amel 54 Asolare* tried all these and twin headsails to boot.

The German 48ft *Seeadler* also dabbled with four configurations, as did Westerly Corsair *Fair Encounter* and Najad 361 *Silver Bear*. As most boats ticked boxes for at least two or three downwind sail types, it's very clear how important it is not to rely on just one system and to have some flexibility in your wardrobe.

**Poling-out** Sun Odyssey 45.2 *Liberty* were one who chose only to use a poled-out genoa, but "would reconsider this, as swept-back spreaders limited the effectiveness of our main, but it was a nice steady ride". The similar-sized Bénéteau *Knighttime* found a poled-out genoa quicker than a cruising chute, safer and more efficient in the conditions, while the Teeds on *Hylas 49 Moonstruck* made hull speed most of the time with their poled-out genoa.

*Sotto Vento's* "bullet-proof" combination was a cruising chute during daylight and poled-out genoa at night. Having broken their spinnaker halyard on the second day and damaged the sail, Tim Luker's Westerly Ocean 49 *Kittiwake* sailed 90 per cent of the time with poled-

out genoa, while goose-winging the main with a preventer – a foolproof and comfortable method adopted also by *Phoebe B* and *Skylark*.

A poled-out genoa and spinnaker is still a popular combination, thought Richard Merrick on his Ovni *Elixir*, but Andy Middleton on a First 47.7 found the former rocks and rolls too much and they had chafe problems with their kite.

**Customising for ARC** Having a sail made especially for the ARC is becoming increasingly popular. Harald Wendelbo had a 43m<sup>2</sup> genoa made for his Hanse 350 instead of the standard 29m<sup>2</sup> jib, and found it did "an excellent job, with no main or spinnaker needed to cruise at six knots". *Minimaxi*, a Maxi 1050, also had a smaller kite made specifically for tradewind conditions, which they used together with poled-out genoa, and reported: "The new storm spinnaker (70m<sup>2</sup> instead of 90m<sup>2</sup>) was a must."

**Parasailors** The spinnakers with air vents continue to find favour with ARC participants. "I am especially happy about the parasailor," remarked Rui Soares from Portugal on *Thor VI*. The Craigs on *Tucanón* agreed, while fellow Lagoon sailors, the Waldbrenners, thought it "was the best sail in the world, but too small!" *Walkabout* praised theirs, but found it hard work to raise and recover, while Oyster 56 *Gwylan's* Charles Manby agreed it was excellent, albeit "best flown from the pole", favouring a poled-out yankee in anything over 20 knots.

In wind strengths over 20 knots it became hard work, thought a Discovery sailor, and it "starts to eat ropes, guys and halyards," added an Oyster crew. A Dutch skipper thought the construction of the clew should be better, but otherwise commended the parasailor. One Najad owner, however, disputed the slogan "set it and forget it" as his parasailor "required constant attention".

*Blonde Moment* agreed on its merits, until their crew had a blonde moment: "they flew it in 36 knots and bang!" Hence they rated a poled-out





The spinnaker with an air vent, the parasailor, is gaining in popularity among sailors on the ARC

genoa as the most reliable configuration. *Peejay*, meanwhile, never got their parasailor out of the bag because they found their poled-out genoa "so simple and effective".

**Twin headsails** 3 *Drifters* found that twin headsails best suited their Bénéteau 50 – "they're very easy to use and forgiving of helming inattention," said David Chesson. Uwe Moser concurred for his 40 footer: "The twins worked perfectly – we never took them down." Maria Ingerup from Sweden found this method easy to control in squalls on *Cantare*. "Safe, easy to use once set up, then easy to reef down in a squall, providing the poles have uphaul, downhaul and guy," was a useful summary from Alan Atkinson.

As the Bavaria 44 *True Blue* had only one uphaul, they needed to find an easier method to douse their headsails quickly in a squall, and *Only*

**“ It's very clear how important it is not to rely on just one system and to have some flexibility in your wardrobe**

*You* reckoned their poled-out twins damaged too easily in squalls. *Zahara's* solution to this was unstayed whisker poles. "Twin headsails were brilliant and very safe because they can furl easily, but a spinnaker would have been a good addition," admitted *Battcatt*.

A Sun Odyssey owner reported: "The Selden pole was useless and snapped three times (repaired twice); the Selden prodger then cut through the tackline regularly so was also useless!" A headsail pole also snapped aboard *Ghost*, a Hanse 470, while other breakages reported were aboard *Pentanamos*, who went through six guy ropes, *Trippwire* who ripped two kites, plus the usual sail tears and halyard breakages.

## Key questions

**Q** What's the one piece of equipment you most regret not buying?

A parasailor (see left) headed the reply to this question, with 10 responses, followed by a spinnaker or spare spinnaker and spinnaker pole/spare pole or genoa pole and a back-up autopilot.

Other notable mentions were SSB radio, proper fishing equipment, solar panels and saltwater shampoo.

- 1 Parasailor
- 2 Spinnaker or spare spinnaker
- 3 Spinnaker or genoa pole and back-up autopilot

**Q** What was the most useful kit aboard?

In 1st place, by a country mile (around five times more valued than its nearest competitor), is an autopilot, but a watermaker holds a very distinguished 2nd place. Although autopilots and watermakers are technical items that regularly require the most after-sales service, they're also regularly the most popular ARC gear items, as they can fundamentally transform a hard crossing into a comfortable one.

A satphone comes in 3rd and a generator 4th. Other than the equipment listed in this survey, notable mentions included preventers, spreader lights, fishing gear, breadmaker, cockpit speakers, fuel, anti-chafe products such as soft shackles or even hose-piping, dog bowls, beer, friends, Nespresso machine (must have been Italian), "support on arrival" and, my favourite, "more vodka to kill fish"!

- 1 Autopilot
- 2 Watermaker
- 3 Satphone



Tor Johnson