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320 VANTAGE



CARIBBEAN NEWS



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THE EAGLE CLASS 53 HAS LAUNCHED

The world's most revolutionary catamaran set sail in February off St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. This is when the Eagle Class 53 was launched by Tommy Gonzalez, president of Bristol, Rhode Island-based Fast Forward Composites, along with two-time Olympic multihull medalist and America's Cup team member, Randy Smyth and crew Amber Bowman. The day started at 4 a.m. to step the rig and in the afternoon the trio sailed the vessel with its Hybrid Wing and main plus jib where they achieved speeds of 10 and 11 knots in 8-knots of breeze. The February launch was the culmination of a project that began four years ago, was conceived by professional sailors and constructed by an international team of designers, engineers and naval architects.

"There are many things that make this cat revolutionary," says Gonzalez. "What stands out is that it has the first single-element wing that rotates 360 degrees, which makes it perfect for living on a mooring or at a dock. The wing reduces the mainsheet load by 40 percent and increases sailing efficiency. The second element is a soft sail which makes the sailmakers happy. It's also the first commercially available yacht with a practical wing. We have only been sailing the boat for a few weeks during its commissioning and the versatility of the Hybrid Wing gives us stability and comfort in multiple wind conditions and sea states. We have been able to sail in 25 knots TWS (true wind speed), gusting 30-plus in 3- to 5-foot seas

with jib and wing alone, stable and comfortable. The C-foil, with winglets, and T-rudder adds to her stability with the active elevator on the rudder which dampens hobby horsing."

The Eagle Class 53s available for sale in four versions. Three are weekenders, with fully appointed cabins and heads, while the fourth is strictly a racing cat. Gonzalez hopes to race in Les Voiles de St. Barth this month. www.fastforwardcomposites.com

