

Optima leads Monterey in sailboat head-to-head

To compare certain bottom paints actually in use, we are conducting head-to-head anti-fouling tests on four boats (two sail, two power). When painted, each test boat's bottom is taped off into quarters, with one paint on the port bow and starboard stern, and the other on the starboard bow and port stern. This gives nearly equal exposure to sunlight and water flow. Here is an update on our sailboat test after six months. The table below also summarizes our other head-to-head tests.

This sailboat comparison between Interlux Optima and Sea Hawk Monterey was prompted by the results of our Group A panels after six months. At that time, both paints were nearly free of growth in both Florida and Connecticut. While neither are among the best Group A paints at 18 months, the two expensive paints are again near the top of Group B panels at the six-month mark (see tables, pages 13 and 10, respectively).

The paints: Optima is a self-polishing, two-part ablative. The usable working time after the two parts are mixed can be shorter than the minimum recoating time, so if you mix too much paint at once, it will go to waste. Sea Hawk Monterey is much easier to apply, just shake and paint. It is marketed as a "hard" copolymer paint, meaning that it will resist scrubbing and erosion better than a standard ablative.

Test boats: A Hunter 25, docked in a canal near the Gulf of Mexico on Siesta Key, Fla., was used only six times during the test period (a bad red tide cut into sailing time). A Union 36, docked on the Elizabeth River, near Chesapeake Bay, was used at least twice a month and for one long summer cruise. The Hunter had four coats of each paint; the Union had three coats,



After six months, a small colony of barnacles clustered on the port stern of our Florida test boat (raised here for inspection).

with an additional coat along the waterline and keel. Both boats were painted and launched in July 2006 and inspected by divers during the first week of January.

Virginia results: The Micron Optima sections scored Excellent, with only a light film of slime present. The Sea Hawk Monterey sections had a fuzzy, algae-type growth, with a heavier concentration along the waterline on both sections. It rated Good. The diver noted that both sections could be completely cleaned by fanning his hand near the hull, suggesting a hard sail would wipe the bottom clean.

Florida results: This boat mostly sat, so the southeast-facing port quarter (Monterey) saw more sunlight. Nevertheless, we saw a clear difference between the paints in sections with equal sun exposure. Overall, Optima scored Good. It had only a light cover of slime near the keel, and at the waterline was a thicker algae-like coating that wiped away. The Monterey scored Fair on the starboard bow where it had heavier concentrations of algae growth that easily wiped away. It scored Poor on the port stern quarter where it had a thin coat of algae, and along the waterline about 100 barnacles and about 100 soft invertebrates measuring up to about 1 inch long (see photo above). We intend

to scrub the bottom and allow the test to go on.

Bottom Line: Optima is leading this race so far. Even considering its sun exposure, the Monterey results in Florida are not what we would expect from a \$200 paint. It seems Sarasota Bay is a tougher proving ground than either test panel location.

PS VALUE GUIDE		TEST BOAT REPORTS		
BOAT	LOCATION	DURATION	PAINT A / RATING	PAINT B / RATING
Union 36 sailboat	Chesapeake, Va.	6 mo.	Interlux Optima / Excellent (Light slime)	Sea Hawk Monterey / Good (Slime and algae)
Hunter 25 sailboat	Sarasota, Fla.	6 mo.	Interlux Optima / Good (Keel slime, waterline algae)	Sea Hawk Monterey / Fair/Poor (Some waterline barnacles)
21-foot Neptune powerboat	Sarasota, Fla.	30 mo. (6 mo. on trailer)	Interlux Micron 66 / Good (Soft growth only)	Pettit Trinidad SR / Fair (Some crusty worms)
21-foot Parker powerboat	Sarasota, Fla.	2 mo.	Interlux Micron 66 / Excellent (Clean)	Interlux Tarr & Wonson Copper Paint / Good (Light slime at stern)