

Choice of Materials Catches Sailmaker's Eye

David W. Baxter, owner of Baxter Sailmakers, a well-respected loft in Norfolk, Va. (www.baxtersailmakers.com), carefully examined each of the test sails and offered the following insight:

"The Top Gun fabric used in the Sailrite kit resists abrasion and UV rays and is good for a variety of marine covers, but it is more prone to stretching than Dacron. Stretch can equate to increased sail flogging. If the sail sees minimal use (a half-dozen times or so per season), it will probably hold up OK. Cruisers or other boaters who spend more time

at anchor will want to go with a more robust material.

"While the instructions were pretty easy for a sailmaker to complete using a commercial-grade sewing machine, it would be harder for the do-it-yourselfer using a lighter machine to sew the Top Gun material. Sailrite says its kits can be constructed "on any home sewing machine," which is true—to an extent. Most sewing machines may be able to sew two or three layers of fabric, but problems (broken needles, improper feed, etc.) occur when trying to force them to punch through more layers of fabric, such as the installation of the corner patches for the sail.

"Purchasing the larger riding sail kit and having a sailmaker

assemble it will cost about \$200-\$250. If you have a suitable machine and the sewing skills necessary to use it, you'll save money but will likely spend three to five hours putting it together (compared to the one hour it'll take an experienced sailmaker to do it)."

THE FINDELTA

"Overall, the FinDelta seems well designed. Since both sides load up at practically the same time, it should be a lot quieter than a traditional anchor-riding sail. It also should allow for less swing.

"The sail is robustly constructed, but the grommets are a bit too small, particularly when compared with the heavy construction of the sail as a whole. In my opinion, a larger, pressed-in ring (or sewn-in ring with webbing) would be better. It is a concern that the smaller grommets could deform in higher winds, causing them to elongate and come out."

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Each "fin" of the FinDelta is color-coded for port and starboard positioning.

