

Rebel 16

This nimble and tough classic is perfect for a daysail or a day of racing

By Tim Gregoire

This year the boat that holds claim to being America's first production fiberglass one-design will celebrate its 60th birthday. That the boat is still in production makes this milestone that much more remarkable.

In 1948, fresh out of the Navy, Ray Greene began building a 16-foot family daysailer out of his Toledo, Ohio, shop using a revolutionary new material called fiberglass. The design of the boat was based on lines drawn by a local high school drawing instructor by the name of Alvin Younquist.

With its wide, 6-foot, 7-inch beam and 110-pound steel centerboard the stable little boat known as the Rebel soon became a hit on the Midwest's inland lakes. And while Greene said he never intended to create a racer, thanks to the boat's performance—courtesy of a large 120-square-foot main and 46-square-foot jib on a fractional rig—it wasn't long before a competitive structure was built around the boat. By 1952 a class association had been firmly established and by 1963 the class boasted 138 active members. Not bad.

Fleets started popping up across the Midwest, south into Kentucky and all the way down to Texas. Meanwhile, class members could be found sailing the inland lakes of the Eastern Seaboard from New York to Florida.

After 25 years of building the Rebel, with more than 3,000 hulls produced, Greene was ready to call it quits and sold the works to a group of Chicago investors. Production of the Rebel continued at a steady pace during the 1970s, and was done under a number of names: Melling Tool Co., Rebel Industries and finally Spindrift One Designs. After Spindrift folded, the Rebel moved to Michigan in 1988 when

Nickels Boat Works of Fenton took over with the production of the Mark V model.

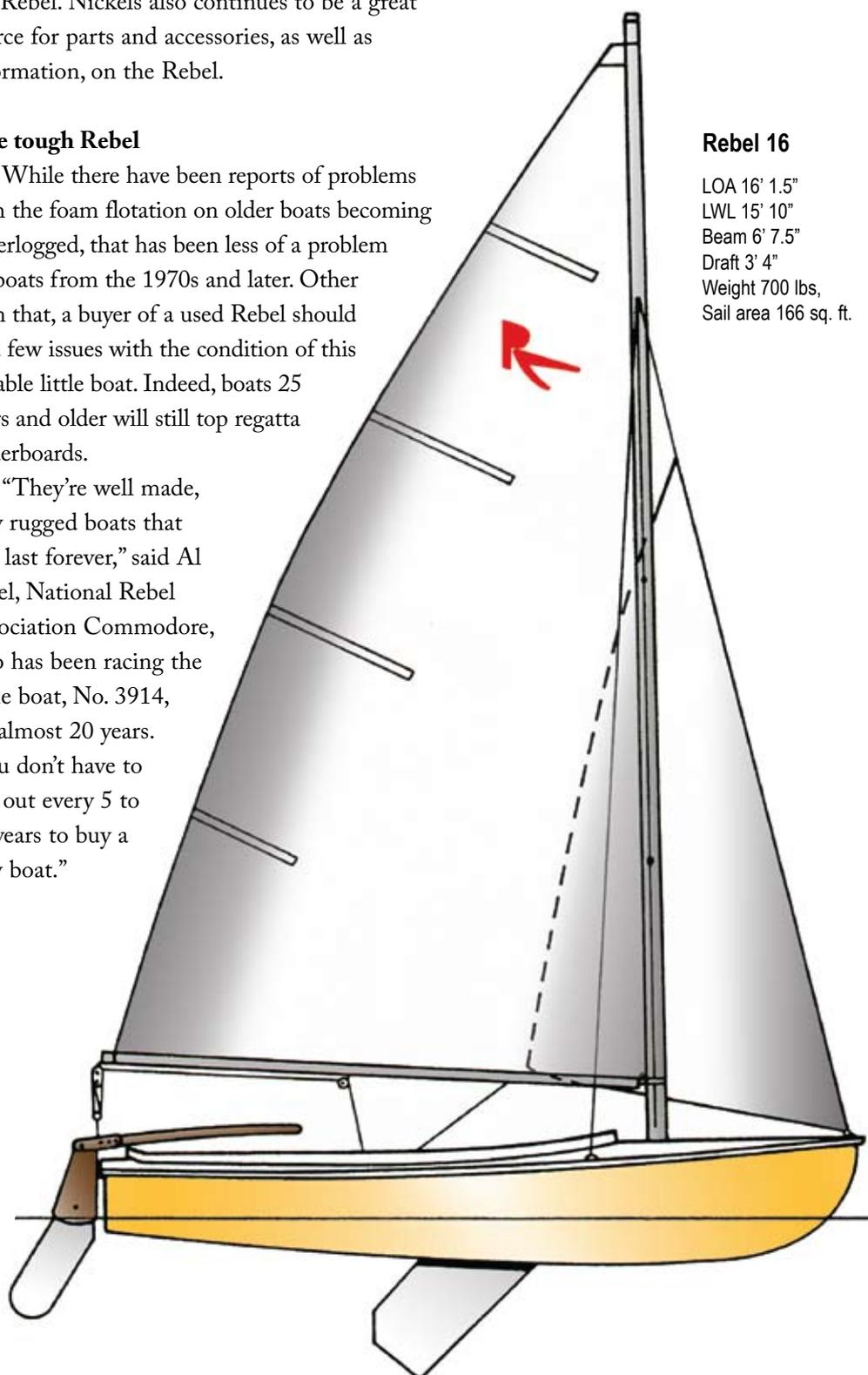
Nickels continues to build the Rebel, offering buyers a choice of a daysailer version for \$9,860 or the optimum racing version for \$11,872 less sails and trailer. A stainless steel centerboard now comes standard with the Rebel. Nickels also continues to be a great source for parts and accessories, as well as information, on the Rebel.

One tough Rebel

While there have been reports of problems with the foam flotation on older boats becoming waterlogged, that has been less of a problem on boats from the 1970s and later. Other than that, a buyer of a used Rebel should find few issues with the condition of this durable little boat. Indeed, boats 25 years and older will still top regatta leaderboards.

"They're well made, very rugged boats that will last forever," said Al Vorel, National Rebel Association Commodore, who has been racing the same boat, No. 3914, for almost 20 years. "You don't have to run out every 5 to 10 years to buy a new boat."

This is one of the reasons for the longevity of the class. Boats tend to stay in the family, passed down from parent to child, with the younger generations wanting to keep the racing going. "My mother races, and my daughter sometimes races, so there are times we'll have three generations on the course," Vorel said.



Rebel 16

LOA 16' 1.5"
 LWL 15' 10"
 Beam 6' 7.5"
 Draft 3' 4"
 Weight 700 lbs,
 Sail area 166 sq. ft.

This also, of course, keeps a lot of boats off the market, and finding a used Rebel can be a bit of a challenge. But thanks to the Internet, it's possible to locate a few sellers. Prices can vary from just under \$1,000 for an older boat in need of some work to \$3,000 or more for a later model. Buyers can typically expect to pay in the neighborhood of \$1,500 for a pre-Nickels-era boat in good shape.

We were fortunate enough to find a late 1970s Rebel listed for sale on www.craigslist.org. Better yet, the seller was within trailering distance. The offer on the boat was \$1,400, so we drove out to take a look. The boat was well cared for, kept under a roof winters, and showed no structural damage. Other than some algae stains and scuff marks the finish looked good, and all the gear was there, including the main and jib, which the owner said he bought new about seven years ago.

We did see some possible issues, including a rusty, pitted centerboard and a wooden rudder that looked to have some rotting. So we offered to pay the full \$1,400 if the owner threw in the trailer, which he originally wanted an extra \$200 for. The deal was closed and we drove off with the Rebel in tow.

Rebel with a cause

With the boat parked in our yard the first item of business we wanted to take care of was the rusty centerboard. Nickels offers a stainless steel replacement board, and we could picture how sweet the boat would look with a shiny new stainless fin. Unfortunately, these centerboards run close to \$1,000; more than two-thirds the cost of the entire boat. So such an extravagant purchase didn't make much sense.

Instead we set about rehabilitating the old board. We removed, with a bit of difficulty, the 110-pound board and set in on sawhorses. The first step was to remove the old paint using paint stripper, then power sanding. We then slathered on some Duro Naval Jelly to remove the rust, wiping down everything with paper towels then finishing up with a clean, acetone-soaked rag.

Next, we filled in the pits and hollows with West Marine Surfacing Putty, and sanded everything smooth. We made certain the blade was fair by running a straight edge along the board. We also further faired the rounded leading edge of the board to within the class rule limits, which prohibit tapering less than 1/16th of an inch and more than one inch in from the leading edge.



Sharon M. Nowak photo

We then primed the board with several coats of Interlux Primocon primer, which when dried we wet sanded with 400-grit paper, and finished with a couple coats of Interlux VC-17m Extra bottom paint.

With the centerboard done, we then turned to the rudder. An ice pick determined the wood was beginning to rot near the lower trailing edge. We probably could have rehabilitated the rudder as well, but since we had saved some money by not replacing the centerboard we decided to spring for a new rudder. We opted for a fiberglass blade, supplied by Nickels for \$375. This cost covered just the blade, as the original aluminum rudder cheeks and hardware were still in good shape.

While we were on the phone with Nickels, we decided to order all new running rigging to replace the weathered lines the boat came with. This included lines for the cunningham, boom vang, centerboard system, as well as sheets and halyards for both main and jib. The total for 112 feet of 1/4-inch line and 105 feet of 5/16-inch line came to \$100.

Next we took a closer look at the standing rigging. The spars showed no defects, and with a bit of metal polish and elbow grease the rotating mast, boom and aluminum whisker pole looked good as new. The 1-by-9 stainless steel shrouds and forestay also showed no visible defects. We did, however, find the diamond stays on the mast to be tuned rather tight. According to the

North Sail's One-Design tuning guide for the Rebel, an overly tight diamond can limit fore and aft mast bend, and can even cause negative pre-bend, where the mast bends forward at the tip. Since we want to have a competitive boat, we loosened the diamond tension and will readjust after doing some sea trials.

As we said, we ultimately wanted to race our Rebel and didn't want a slow boat. So obviously the 7-year-old suit of sails had to go. This would be our biggest expense, and a new suit of sails would alone exceed the original cost of the boat. A new main and standard jib (a light air jib is

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Project list and cost summary

1977 Rebel 16 \$1,400

Retrofit budget:

1. Naval Jelly, paint stripper, acetone	\$38
2. Evercoat Marine Surfacing Putty	\$25
3. Interlux Primocon	\$28
4. Interlux VC 17m Extra	\$48
5. Fiberglass rudder	\$375
6. Running rigging	\$100
7. Sails	\$1,615
8. Metal polish	\$13
9. Sandpaper, misc.	\$18

Total retrofit work \$2,260
161% of purchase price

Grand total \$3,660



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also available) from North Sails set us back \$1,615, which included \$20 for class royalties but not shipping. Certainly this was a blow to our budget, but we rationalized it by thinking about the fun we would be having with some close racing come summer.

Our last order of business was getting our bottom clean and smooth. We first scrubbed the hull down with a detergent then wet sanded everything below the rails to a slick surface with 1,200-grit paper. After a rinse and wipe down with the hose and clean towels we were satisfied we had a slick bottom. We finished off by treating all our hardware and moving bits to a little McLube Sailkote spray.

We now have what we feel will be a contender on the course for our racing crew of two. Yet, with the roomy Rebel cockpit that can seat six, we're also look-



Sharon M. Nowak photo

ing forward to some lazy summer daysailing when friends and family show up. Either way, we'll certainly get our money's worth from this tough but nimble little classic.

Sources

Interlux, (800) 468-7589, www.yachtpaint.com; National Rebel Class Association, www.rebelsailor.com; Nickels Boat Works, (810) 750-1855, www.nickelsboats.com; North Sails One Design, (203) 877 7627, www.onedesign.com; West Marine, (800) 262-8464, www.westmarine.com.

Dana 24

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A previous owner must have agreed, as the boat was already equipped to handle a three-inch flue. We selected a Sigmar 180 stainless-steel diesel cabin heater from Go2Marine. It has the same flue size and outputs 6,000 to 18,000 Btu—more than enough for the Dana 24's cozy cabin. The 18-pound heater stands 20 inches high and is 10 inches in diameter; it has a hinged bronze top and even a small cooking surface. We chose the brass model to complement the 24's classic interior.

Prepare to launch

While the Dana 24's existing sails were adequate, they weren't holding their shape as well as we would have liked. So, we decided a new suit would be the right way to start off the next sailing season. Fortunately, since the 24 is back on the production line, we could go straight to Pacific Seacraft. For a total of \$3,493, we purchased an Ullman 7-ounce, full-batten mainsail with two reefs and an Ullman 7-ounce, 110-percent genoa with reef.

For an additional \$440, we got the roller-furling headsail upgrade. While you do lose a little sail area with the system, we

felt it was a worthy trade-off. To increase the Dana 24's user-friendliness for short-handed sailing, we also found two Lewmar 30BST two-speed, self-tailing winches online through WMJ Marine for \$1,560.

We were almost finished. While the previous owner had cleaned the 24 up reasonably well, we noticed some stubborn spots in the deck's nonskid coating. 3M's nonskid deck cleaner did the trick. We also turned to 3M to handle the moderate oxidation on the boat's topsides. We purchased the company's marine cleaner-and-wax combo, a light rubbing compound with a blend of waxes. One application cleaned, polished and protected the oxidized surfaces.

Since we still had a little left in our \$8,000 retrofit budget, we splurged and purchased a Force 10 Stow N' Go propane barbecue with a cockpit rail mount for \$170. Nothing is better for a festive afternoon at the marina or cool evenings in a secluded anchorage. And now, for approximately 15 percent of her purchase price, our Dana 24 was ready to cast off the docklines come spring.

Sources

Ahoy Captain, www.ahoycaptain.com, (888) 464-5582; Go2Marine, www.go2marine.com, (800) 998-9508; Pacific Seacraft, www.pacificseacraft.com; Redden Marine Supply, www.reddenmarine.com, (800) 426-9284; WMJ Marine Corp., www.wmjmarine.com, (877) 330-9758; West Marine, www.westmarine.com, (800) 685-4838.