

Nimble Kodiak

by Quentin Warren

Anybody who's ever been to a major boat show and had the good fortune to shoot the breeze about nothing in particular with builder Gerry Koch, or discuss the merits of gunkholing in the Pacific Northwest with designer Ted Brewer, is well on his way to understanding what the **Nimble Kodiak** is all about. A charming little double-ended motor sailer with a short, low-aspect rig and a boxy, trawlerlike pilothouse, the Kodiak represents a practical approach to cruising in beautiful country where the weather can be chilly and wet, or even hot and scorching, and where Euro-styling is nothing other than a nonsensical hyphenated word.

The Kodiak is the latest in a logical progression of Brewer-designed, Koch-built mini-cruisers

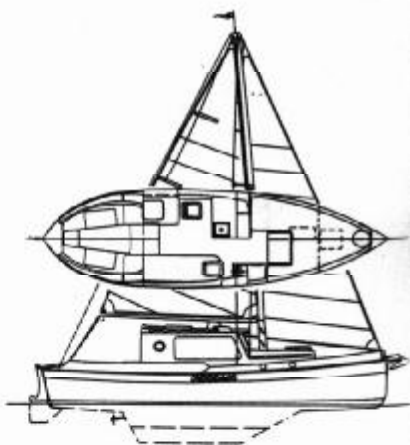
based on the chined hull of a sharpie and the versatile parameters of a trailerable boat. Her predecessors, most notably the Nimble 24, Nimble 25 and Nimble 25 Arctic, share her curious features — on the one hand beguiling, on the other rugged as a tugboat — and they leave no doubt as to the functional priorities that drive the group.

Those priorities? Cruising accommodations in well under 30 feet, trailerability behind a good station wagon, an easily handled sail plan, the ability to poke into undiscovered haunts, and a happy-go-lucky approach to the elusive "performance" criterion. The notion that it all works for those who turn it into a lifestyle is documented even in the pages of this magazine, most recently in Dick and Ginny Walters' tribute

to Ontario's Lake Of The Woods aboard a Nimble 25 Arctic in the April 1992 issue and in Ted Brewer's own account of a cruise through Lower Puget Sound published in August 1993.

Construction And Execution

Gerry Koch does not presume the detailing and finish of an Alden or a Swan, but he does produce good glass work at an attractive price. The Kodiak features a hull cored with cross-linked foam (either Klegecell or Divinycell) for superior impact resistance in trailering situations, all hand laid and vacuum bagged with an isophthalic gel coat backed by vinyl ester resin and a combination of biaxial and triaxial cloth. Polyester resin is used where applicable for sec-



ondary bonding. The deck incorporates cross-linked foam core for stiffness in all vertical surfaces and solid FRP for horizontal surfaces where the compressive loading of thru-deck fittings comes into play. Deck gel coat features positive, molded-in non-skid. Hull to deck consists of outward flanges from amidship forward and inward flanges from amidship aft, all set in 3M 5200 polyurethane adhesive and thru-bolted along an aluminum toe-rail extrusion on less than six-inch centers. Major bulkheads below are glassed into place to stiffen the monocoque structure.

The rudder is a foam-cored blade hung off the transom on gudgeons and pintles. It is operated by a conventional tiller in the cockpit or by a wheel nested securely in the pilothouse that connects via a hydraulic override. The leading edge of the rudder extends somewhat forward of the transom beneath the boat to provide a balanced component that aids control at the helm.

Although the underbody features a subtle radius, it is predominantly flat but for the keel/sump element that stretches fore and aft for about 12 feet in the middle of the boat. In the centerboard version of the Kodiak this becomes part of the trunk; in the fixed-keel version it becomes "a keel stub" or "seat" for four inches of external lead that is bolted on with a dozen 3/4-inch stainless bolts, bonded with epoxy and faired with FRP.

Systems And Mechanical

A choice of engines includes a Honda 15-horsepower outboard set unobtrusively into a cockpit well, or a Yamaha diesel inboard of 9.9, 18 or even 27 horsepower mounted in a dedicated engine compartment. In either case, fuel capacity is a generous 18 gallons in fixed tankage for good motoring range. As far as propellers are concerned, Gerry Koch's recommendation is quite simple: If you like to sail a lot, go with a two-blade or folding unit; if you prefer motoring, beef it up with a fixed three-blade.

Two deep-cycle gel cells handle electrical storage and are charged either by a magneto unit off the outboard or conventionally by alternator off the optional inboard. A distribution panel is located in the pilothouse alongside the hydraulic

helm. There is plenty of available amperage to run interior and exterior lights, sailing instruments, navigation gear and even 12-volt DC refrigeration. Most owners are apt to customize the systems menus of their Nimbles according to their cruising requirements and tastes.

Accommodations

The interior features sleeping quarters for two in the bow, and then a deceptively roomy pilothouse structure that includes a stand-up galley to port, steering station to starboard, a six-foot settee/berth behind the pilot's chair, a convertible dinette amidship, and a folding chart table aft and to port that hinges magically into a full standing private head and wet locker with the option of a shower. The soles are teak and holly and most of the cabinetwork and trim is rendered in blond sen wood or honey teak. Forward of the galley on the port side is a cedar-lined hanging locker.

The main bulkhead separating the seven-foot-plus forepeak from the pilothouse occurs where the compression post is installed. This can be ordered as a continuous teak-veneered unit, as a fenestrated unit with shelving over the galley, or even fully open. Two opening hatches in the forward cabin promote ventilation throughout the boat, bring in ambient light and provide easy ac-



cess to ground tackle on the foredeck in anchoring situations.

Deck Plan, Sail Handling And Under Way

On any boat this small with so grand a deckhouse, movement fore and aft is by needs compromised at the gangways. This is the case on the Kodiak, but the problem has been minimized in at least three noteworthy ways. First, Nimble installs continuous heavy-duty stainless pulpit tubing — in lieu of wire lifelines — for 17 feet from the bow aft to keep anyone moving back and forth securely aboard the boat.

The Kodiak provides an inside steering station with standing headroom, a galley to port and sleeping quarters in the V-berth forward. The head is enclosed by a convertible plywood structure (in the foreground to the left) that folds together and turns into a nav platform when so deployed.

Secondly, a generous allotment of thru-bolted grab rails extends along the cabin top and even along the foredeck, so that there is virtually no point at which you are left without purchase as you move forward or aft. And thirdly,

Comparative Specifications

	Nimble Kodiak	Skimmer 25	Alberg Sea Sprite
LOA	26'6" (8.1 m)	25'5" (7.75 m) w/o sprit	22'6" (6.9 m)
LWL	24'3" (7.4 m)	24'9" (7.5 m)	16'3" (5.0 m)
Beam	8'6" (2.6 m)	8'2" (2.5 m)	7'0" (2.1 m)
Draft (shoal)	2'10" (0.86 m)	N/A	3'0" (0.91 m)
Draft (c/bd)	1'10" / 4'4" (0.56 / 1.32 m)	1'4" / 3'10" (0.41 / 1.2 m)	N/A
Ballast	1,350 lbs. (612.4 kgs.)	1,000 lbs. (453.6 kgs.)	1,476 lbs. (669 kgs.)
Displacement	3,640 lbs. (1,651 kgs.)	3,600 lbs. (1,633 kgs.)	3,350 lbs. (1,520 kgs.)
Sail area	285 sq.ft. (26.5 m ²)	375 sq.ft. (34.8 sq.m)	247 sq.ft. (23 sq.m.)
Moat above water	29'7" (9.0 m)	26'0" (7.92 m)	30'0" (9.1 m)
Ballast/Disp	.37	.28	.44
Sail Area/Disp	19.3	25.5	17.0
Disp./Length	114	106	348
Water Tankage	14.5 gal. (55 l.)	20 gal. (76 l.)	10 gal. (38 l.) opt.
Fuel Tankage	16 gal. (68 l.)	20 gal. (76 l.)	Tank locker opt.
Auxiliary	10-hp. 4-stroke outboard	9-hp. Yanmar diesel	Outboard opt.
Designer	Ted Brewer	Reuel Parker	Carl Alberg
Base Price	\$35,950	\$29,200	N/A

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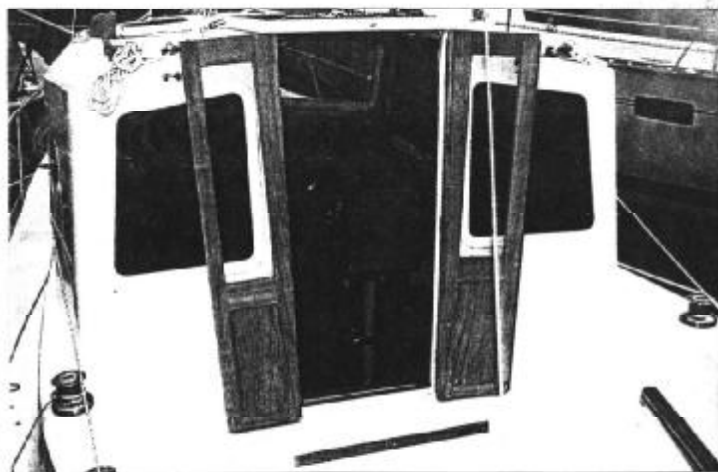
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Reviews



When the weather cooperates and you opt for steering conventionally by tiller, you simply disconnect the inside helm hydraulics and retire to a genuine after cockpit with secure seating and sheeting close by.

as noted, access to the bow from an opening hatch in the V-berth provides an even safer route. Once on the bow, a deep "five-gallon" anchor-and-chain locker keeps tackle under control and near at hand.

The cockpit is deep and secure, with coamings that not only support one's back when seated but also, by virtue of their width, provide elevated seating on the rails in nice weather. Significantly, the cockpit settees are long enough to stretch out or even sleep on. And drink holders are molded in. Forward of the cabin house, a proprietary Nimble tabernacle supports the deck-stepped spar. It provides for relatively simple stepping and unstepping of the rig for those who truly take advantage of the boat's trailerability, or who find themselves faced with a low bridge that won't open and a particularly enticing cruising destination beyond.

The sail plan with 285 square feet of canvas set on a low-aspect rig is unimposing and quite easy to handle. The main-sail plus an overlapping roller-furled genoa are trimmed from the cockpit, and once you have them balanced and preset it is a simple matter to move into the pilothouse if the weather is too cool or too hot, engage the hydraulic steering and take command from the comfort of an in-

side station.

We sailed the Kodiak on flat water in a fluky eight knots of breeze in a creek off the Chesapeake Bay one late-October day, and found the boat true to her design precepts on all points of sail (and power). A small motor sailer with a 50/50 motorboat/sailboat disposition, in light air she was ready for her engine, and when we turned it on and took over from inside the pilothouse she kicked up her heels and behaved like a truly well conceived — albeit diminutive — trawler. Needless to say we were curious as to the vessel's sailing capabilities and upon launching some canvas we were pleased to see her move out nicely and respond to the sail plan despite the lack of solid breeze. With a flattish bottom and shallow keel, movement to leeward was unavoidable, but the boat is not designed to go like a witch to weather in the first place, and the notion that she sails nicely cracked off the breeze or downwind should satisfy any serious gunkholer whose 50/50 ambitions are in tune with those she represents.

Among the Kodiak's more pleasing traits is the honesty with which this boat approaches the idea of comfortable inland cruising at any time of the year. The rugged look is in keeping with our expectation of shelter; the classic sheer in keeping with our own traditional values of a sailing vessel for all time. The fact that the whole package is trailerable only increases our anticipation of its range and versatility. The Kodiak is no gold plater, but she does have purpose and character to spare.