Fischer Panda

The No.1 in Europe for Mobile, Super Silent Diesel Generators

Experiences with a 10 ton Catamaran and the Fischer Panda Whisperprop DE-Drive System *)

Drive System Technical Information:

Generator: 1x AGT-DE 26.000 PMS with approx. 26 kW
additional 4kW DC alternator and HTL-G charging converter

Antrieb: 2x Shaft Drives each with 10 kW performance

Two years ago, I decided to build an exceptional catamaran and just such a vessel must also have an exceptional drive system.

Before beginning with construction, I had many discussions with "so-called" experts. The outcome of these left me feeling uneasy and uncertain about my decision to proceed. I can now safely say that I had made the right choice. I cannot say that I am satisfied with the Fischer Panda Drive System, on the contrary, I am utterly inspired by it.

In all my 35 years of sailing, I have never had so much power available from a drive. Even after the not-so-easy 1200 sea miles from the Black Sea to the Adriatic, I still cannot believe that so much power is available with so little effort required from the generator.

I was pleasantly surprised during the first trail runs how we reached, according to GPS, 9 knots with the generator running a full power. Even more pleasing is the fact that with a generator supplying 8 kW, we could achieve 6,5 knots even with a light headwind.

The fun really begins when navigating in a harbour. The two joysticks I use manoeuvre reminded me of how it must be steering a radio controlled model, and this is now exactly how I manoeuvre a ten ton Catamaran. When you need power, it's simply there. No time spent waiting for the drive to kick in, simply move the lever into the desired position really does mean - move the vessel into the desired place.

As opposed to my usual "nice and slowly" approach, it gave me a really good feeling to head a little faster than usual for the jetty - just to raise the crews heart rates. Just a boats length from the jetty and almost certain collision, a hard "backboard" (lever to reverse position) and the catamaran turns 45° and parked, a fenders distance away from the jetty. The only thing I have to be careful with, is that I don't offload the crew at the same time!

Now fear, is something you really do experience when switching to full speed reverse while travelling at speed forwards. The catamaran stops within one and a half times it's length and you are left feeling that the stern is going to be ripped off. The lack of noise during acceleration results in a complete loss of feeling for speed. 8 knots is easily reached in the marina within a few boats lengths.

Even when cruising at 6 knots on calm water, with a unbelievable 6 kilowatts from the generator, there is 3 kilowatts available for each motor. The lack of noise, which I am beginning to enjoy, gives you the feeling of only traveling with 2-3 knots. This feeling was enhanced as the stern waves cannot be seen from the central cockpit in our catamaran. The jet of the cooling water coming from engine on the waterline was the loudest sound to be heard at this speed. The was nothing else for me to do during longer trips other than to increase the performance to 10kW which allows a cruising speed of 8 knots.

A very comfortable feature is the on-board electric heating. Upon leaving the port in Varna the temperature was 3 degrees. A heater ensured the navigation seat was always occupied. I can imagine installing electrical floor heating throughout the cabin when Greenland or Patagonia are up on the touring plan. Although Northern Germany is not much warmer!

We had particular tricky situation on Sea of Marmara. We were unable to disengage the shaft as a result of a gearbox not being present. A gust of wind sped up the catamaran to around 14-15 knots which caused the propeller began to spin very fast. The drive motor now began acting as a generator and caused some damage to the motor controller. Note: since this incidence Fischer Panda has undertaken measures to prevent this from reoccurring. From this point onwards we were only able to travel with one motor. This meant that we could now only achieve 6.5 to 7 knots on calm water. Navigating in the harbour shifted from being a fun experience into manoeuvring nightmare. An outboard helped prevent this from being a real problem.

Before Athens, where Fischer Panda were already waiting with the necessary replacement parts - thanks again for your promptness, we had to battle against a 20 knot wind and short choppy waves. Even though our drive system had only one motor available, it passed this test with flying colours. Any remaining doubts were now gone and I can repeat my earlier conclusion, "I am not satisfied, I am inspired!"

"In my opinion, this drive is not the drive of the future, but is the drive of the present!"

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*) This report is a translation. The original report is avaibable in German from Fischer Panda.
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