

Improve Your Boat! **4** Great DIY Upgrades

**SAIL**

# BEST BOATS

2015

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The systems aboard the Morris Ocean Series 48 GT are as elegant as the boat itself



## INNOVATION AWARD

# Morris Ocean Series 48 GT

On the one hand, there was no shortage of innovative ideas at this year's Annapolis show. Among them were the Seascope 27's clever outboard motor stowage arrangement, push-button belowdecks reel winches on the Island Packet SP Cruiser MK2 and several full-blown distributed power installations using the CZone system from New Zealand.

On the other hand, however, there were also some of the most untidy electrical installations our systems expert, Nigel Calder, had seen in years, several of which did not comply with current ISO and ABYC standards. In fact, Calder suspects some builders laid off too many of their skilled workers during the recession and are now having trouble getting back up to speed.

With this in mind, our systems award this year goes to Morris Yachts's Ocean Series 48 GT, not for cutting-edge technology (although there were a couple of lithium-ion batteries at the heart of the installation) but

for an excellent application of the best of conventional technology in what Calder likes to call a "DC-based boat." This approach couples a DC generator to a powerful battery bank with a systems monitor that tracks the battery state of charge and automatically starts and stops the generator based on state of charge. All the boat's AC loads are run off DC-to-AC inverters. The generator is from Fischer-Panda. The lithium-ion batteries and electronics package are from Victron Energy.

In such a system the generator is only run at relatively high loads, close to its peak efficiency. If it can't be run at these loads, it is shut down. As a result, the generator run hours and maintenance will be a fraction of those with a conventional AC generator installation, with obvious lifestyle benefits and a substantial reduction in fuel consumption. As Calder puts it, "This is the ideal energy solution for a midsize offshore cruising boat, beautifully executed by Morris Yachts." [morrisyachts.com](http://morrisyachts.com)

## SMALL BOAT

# Topper Topaz Argo

A few months ago, *SAIL* ran a story in which we considered exactly what it is that makes for a great small boat. And as fate would have it, the Topaz Argo from the UK's Topper International meets an awful lot of the standards we came up with. Fast, well mannered, easy to sail and good looking, this is the kind of a boat that will appeal to sailors of all ages and backgrounds. Better still, because it is built using Topper's proprietary TRILAM rotomolding technique—which sandwiches a foam core between and inner and out skins of super tough Metalicene polyethylene—the boat is virtually unsinkable and more than up to the task of withstanding years of use and abuse.

Like the venerable Flying Scot, the boat is exceedingly stable for its 14ft 4in LOA, thanks to an aggressive chine and a generous 6ft of beam that also provides for plenty of sail-carrying ability. The rig has been configured for easy singlehanded, but the boat can also

be raced by a crew of two, and there is plenty of room in the cockpit for three or even four sailors, making it an excellent trainer. For those in search of more horsepower on the racecourse, a "Sport" version is available with a single trapeze and A-sail flown from a sprit. Additional touches include a super-slick spin-naker launch and retrieval system, molded-in handholds beneath the gunwale for hauling the 243lb hull around before and after sailing, and a nifty channel in the chine designed to further reduce the spray flying up into the crew's faces. The centerboard and rudder are both fabricated in epoxy: clearly this boat is more than just a learner's toy.

For years—since the advent of yachting, really—it's been all too evident that just about anyone can create a high-octane sailing beast that will thrill its crew when the wind is up. Far more challenging, however, is a boat that can give its crews a thrill while not scaring the

A combination of performance and practicality make the Topaz Argo a winner



wits out of less experienced sailors. The Topaz Argo is one of those rare boats that not only does both, but does both well. Let's hope we see more of these fine little boats on this side of the Atlantic. [norbanks.com](http://norbanks.com) 