



LOA: 67'10"
BEAM: 18'1"
DRAFT: 5'1"
DISPL.: 82,500 lb.
FUEL: 1,000 gal.
WATER: 300 gal.
TEST POWER: 2/900-hp Volvo
Penta IPS 1200s
OPTIONAL POWER: None
TRANSMISSION: Volvo Penta 1.88:1 gear ratio
PROPELLERS: Volvo Penta Q4 propset
GENERATORS: 21.5 kW Cummins Onan;
13.5 kW Cummins Onan
WARRANTY: Major components (castings,
etc.) are covered for 5 years or 2,000 hours;
there is also an extended coverage
available up to 5 years (total).
BASE PRICE: \$3,150,000
PRICE AS TESTED: \$3.4 million

TOUR DE FORCE

THE NEW SABRE 66—THE COMPANY'S LARGEST BUILD TO DATE—
IS A TESTAMENT TO DOWN EAST CRAFTSMANSHIP.
BY PETER A. JANSSEN PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILLY BLACK

David Jirikovic was exhausted; it was 2300 hours on a wintry Saturday night and he'd come more than 400 miles since breakfast. But as Jirikovic, a yacht broker now serving as a long-range delivery captain, backed the brand-new Sabre 66 Dirigo into her slip at the Jupiter, Florida, Yacht Club, he pointed to a number on the Garmin chartplotter. "We've gone 1,568 nautical miles," he said. "Six days from Maine to Florida on hull number one—without a single problem. That's not too bad." Indeed, on a trip that started in Rockland, Maine, in late January, where ice hung from the railings and water froze as soon as it hit the windshield and where the boat surged through 10-foot seas off Block Island and then 6-foot seas off Charleston, Dirigo's performance was not too bad at all.

In the end, the numbers tell only part of the tale: Dirigo had traveled 1,568 nm over 64 hours at an average speed of 24.5 knots, burning a total of 3,562.5 gallons for an average of 55.7 gph. But the real, no-holds-barred story here is much greater than a review of the statistics. In the end, Dirigo lived up her name, which translates as "I lead" in Latin. (*Dirigo*, not coincidentally, is the motto for the state of Maine, where all Sabres are built.)

And the trip also proved that Dirigo is ready for superlatives: It is the largest Sabre, the most powerful Sabre yet (with twin 900-horsepower Volvo Penta diesels and IPS-3 pod drives), the most sophisticated (with a new digital-switching system so all-seeing they nicknamed it HAL, after the iconic talking computer in *2001: A Space Odyssey*) and, to my mind, the best-looking Sabre yet with the company's classic low-profile Down East lines now stretched out over a 66-foot hull. Dirigo is also Sabre's most yacht-like vessel yet, with an elegant fit and finish, a full-beam midships master suite with a king-sized berth and a walk-in closet, and such custom touches as the name etched into the stainless stern cleats and the base of the pulpit would call for. In short, Dirigo is not your father's Sabre; it represents a major tour de force for a company that started with a 28-foot sailboat 46 years ago. "For Dirigo we took the best attributes of British and Italian design, but it's definitely still a Down East boat," said Bentley Collins, Sabre's VP of marketing and sales, as he walked me thorough the almost-completed hull last August in the factory just outside Rockland.

None of this happened overnight. A three-state-

room, three-head luxury express cruiser, Dirigo was more than five years in the making, and the planning included Sabre owners who wanted a larger boat (beyond the previous flagship, a 54), and Sabre dealers, designers, engineers, and management. The first key element, said Kevin Burns, Sabre's VP for design, was that the new boat had to be amenable to owner-operation. "Every system and interface has been arranged to support the owner-as-captain concept," he said. Second, he had to design "an inspirational space" with the main deck as the social hub; "it should be breathtaking and hard to leave." Then the master suite had to be "envisioned as the owner's retreat within the boat," and finally, the boat had to be "nautically authentic," where "the hull lines, profile, hardware, joinery, equipment, and materials were thoughtfully incorporated to be a constant reminder of the nautical environment. They all say you are on a real boat on a real ocean."

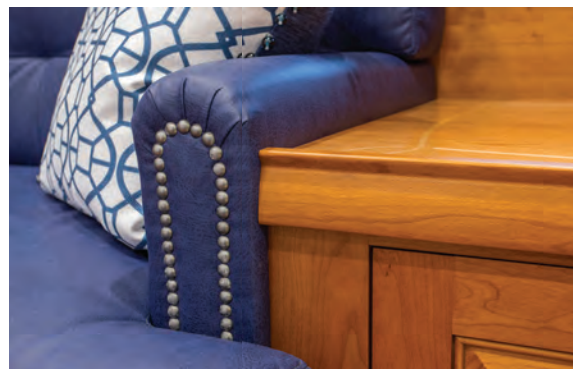
When Dirigo was launched and set off on its course for Florida, there was no question about the "real boat, real ocean" part. Indeed, the wind chill was 8 degrees, and the waves in the Gulf of Maine seemed to have been piling up ever since they left France. By the sixth day, when I joined the cruise in St. Augustine, Florida, the seas had calmed down, and the end was in sight. For Jirikovic, a broker at Down East Yacht Sales in Jupiter, this was a fast delivery to the new owner, who wanted to see her before she had to be positioned at the Yachts Miami Beach show just a few days away. (Dirigo is his fourth Sabre, an upgrade from his 54.)

The first thing that caught my eye as the boat pulled into the fuel dock at the St. Augustine Municipal Marina was the striking hull color, a custom blend of blue and gray with a touch of black. It's called Awlcraft Shark, and it's simply stunning. As I climbed aboard the boat, Tom Anderson, the Sabre engineer on board, was standing in the cockpit holding an iPad Mini, one of two on the boat, that controls the AC and DC network switching systems on board (see "HAL Goes Cruising" on page 46). With a few taps of his finger, he had just pumped fuel from the main tank (which holds 500 gallons) to the two side tanks (250 gallons each). The 420 gallons we were now adding would go quickly into the main tank, and we could be on our way. Leaving the inlet, with kids playing in the low sand of St. Augustine beach off to starboard, Jirikovic pushed the throttles forward, and the big Sabre simply sped ahead; the 900-horsepower Volvos responding immediately, with no lag at all; the Volvo Interceptor automatic trim tabs doing their thing, leveling out the boat after a barely perceptible bow rise.

The ocean was almost flat on this particular afternoon, and Dirigo settled in at an easy cruising speed of 27.6 knots, burning 60 gph at 2080 rpm. The boat was so comfortable and quiet that I took a sound reading at the helm, registering 71 decibels. Quiet, indeed. Then I went below for another reading in the master stateroom, which is protected by extra soundproofing in the bulkhead separating it from the engine room.



The elegant salon is filled with light from windows all around, plus the super-sized sunroof (top). Sabre's Maine craftsmen added lots of big-yacht details throughout Dirigo.



HAL Goes Cruising

THE DIGITAL-SWITCHING NETWORK on Dirigo is made up of Mastervolt CZone and Maretron products, displayed and controlled through Garmin displays and Apple iPad Minis. These systems allow a builder to develop individual switching configurations for each boat; Sabre engineering added layers of sophistication so that almost all AC and DC systems on Dirigo are controlled by the network. During construction, network modules are mounted throughout the boat as close as possible to an actual load, greatly reducing the amount of wiring that normally runs from each load to the circuit breaker panel. On Dirigo, two iPad Minis and two LaunchPort base stations (one in the saloon, the other in the master stateroom) provide wireless portable control of the network. Each circuit is monitored individually, and any load currents outside normal parameters signal an alarm on the iPads, alerting the owner to any problem before it becomes critical. This system also is a big advantage in trouble-shooting and maintenance. If a water pump, for example, normally draws 10 amps and the current rises to 12 amps, the increase probably isn't enough to trip a circuit breaker and the pump will still work. But the network senses that something is amiss, and signals the alarm. The system also has push-button modes. If you push the "boat at dock unattended" mode, for example, the network sets all circuits for that situation: Shore power on, water pump off, all interior lights off, whatever else is preset for that boat under those circumstances. You also can set an automatic load management mode between shore power and Dirigo's twin generators. The network will automatically start a generator and DC charging based on low battery voltage if the boat loses shore power.



galley behind two folding doors, and it has a walkaround queen bed. The VIP head is a bit smaller than the master, but the shower compartment is still large by yacht standards. The third cabin is in the bow, with scissor berths mounted on tracks. Push a button and you can have two separate halves of a V berth, or you can select the one-bed-for-two adults configuration. In this cabin, the head (which also serves as the day head) is on the starboard side; the larger shower compartment is to port. On the port side coming back to the galley, an "art nook" is inset into the wall, awaiting the owner's choice of painting or sculpture. The galley itself runs along the starboard side, with lots of atrium-like light coming down from the three windows over the helm plus more from two opening ports above the custom granite countertop; the granite here matches the granite on the bar and fridge in the saloon. Underway, the seas built to 2 feet or so after dark, while the northern Florida coastline continued to unfold a few miles off to the west, but Dirigo just powered along, smooth and strong. For the new 66, Kevin Burns had designed a modified-V hull, with 16 degrees of deadrise at the transom and downward-turning chines and spray rails. The hull is resin-infused with Corecell foam coring; the hull stringers are reinforced with carbon fiber. Eventually, just before 2300 hours, we picked up the red and green lights marking Jupiter Inlet. We arrived on an incoming tide, so Jirikovic gave the Volvos a little juice, worked the throttles and we surfed inside. We easily passed under two bridges (Dirigo's height is about 21 feet) and arrived at the Jupiter Yacht Club back by U.S. 1. Using the IPS joystick, Jirikovic backed the big Sabre, which has an 18-foot 1-inch beam, into a slip that was maybe 19 feet wide. He checked the instruments for a final time and shut down the engines; his job over. "Every once in a while you get a good trip," he said. "This has definitely been a good trip." □

Sabre Yachts, 207-655-3831; www.sabreyachts.com

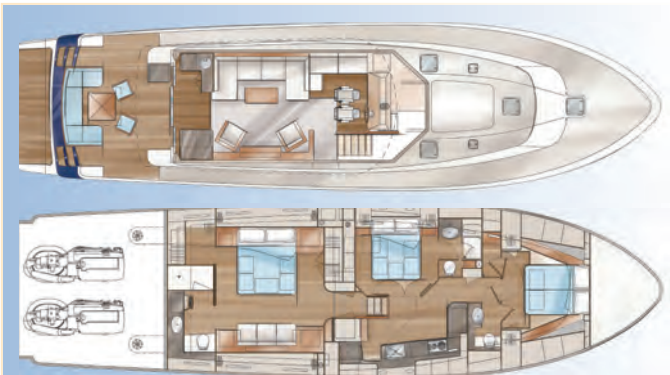


The helm station (top) is raised slightly to create a pilothouse effect; sightlines from the helm are excellent all around. (Above from left) The large galley, built for cruising; the midships full-beam master, with lots of living and stowage space, and the engine room where the twin Volvos are easy to access.

This time the reading was an exceptional 74 decibels. We had 212 nm to go. "It's time to settle in for a long ride," said Jirikovic, which gave me plenty of time to check out the boat. I'd climbed aboard via the teak swim platform; it's large enough to hold and lift 1,200-pound dinghy, and it drops down hydraulically to provide water access. You climb up three teak steps in the reverse-sloped transom to go through boarding gates on each side to the cockpit, a large, inviting social area. A comfortable U-shaped settee faces an adjustable table that can be doubled in size by pushing a button; it can be raised for cocktails or lowered to become a sun lounge. For overhead protection, a SureShade retractable awning fits seamlessly in a little pocket in the back of the cabintop. A Volvo IPS joystick is mounted on the starboard side for easy docking. A wide cockpit hatch opens to the engine room, which has stand-

ing headroom and walkaround space all around the twin Volvos. There's a tool chest against the forward bulkhead, next to the Racors. And a panel opens to provide access to a manually operated fuel manifold, as a safety backup to the digital switching system. Walking forward, the side decks are wide and the railing high for safety. And the oversized custom teak coamings accent the big-yacht look. You enter the saloon via two glass sliding doors with stainless frames. The entire saloon seems unusually open, with light coming in from the glass doors aft, the three large windshield panes forward, the super-sized skylight over the helm station, a glass door leading to the side deck on the starboard side, and large windows on each side. The side windows are glazed and frameless for more of the big-yacht look. For the sake of ventilation, two of these slide open on the port side and one on the starboard side (because of the door).

Two matching cherry cabinets with beautiful granite countertops anchor the aft corners (one's a bar, the other a fridge), then an extra-long (10 feet) U-shaped settee with beautiful blue leather is to port. It faces another custom table on two stainless pedestals that folds, spins, rotates, and does everything short of actually serving cocktails or dealing the cards. Across, on the starboard side, is a 50-inch TV on a lift, flanked by two lounge chairs. The helm deck is elevated a few inches (a mini-pilothouse effect), and has a three-person L-shaped settee, also in blue leather, on the port side. Two matching Stidd chairs face four multifunction displays at the helm; the one directly ahead of the captain is the Garmin/Volvo Penta Glass Cockpit helm, integrating all the nav and engine data on one screen. Ultraleather handholds are on each side of the helm, another luxury touch, and two small drawers have room for glasses, sunscreen, whatever. You go down to the accommodation deck on five teak stairs on the starboard side, turn left at the galley and go down three more to the midships master. As in the saloon, I was surprised at the amount of standing headroom here—a full 6 feet 4 inches—a height that is very hard to pull off in a boat that still has an eye-catching low profile. The head of the athwartships king-sized bed is to port, facing a large TV and three-person settee to starboard. Two stainless portlights on each side, flanking the bed and also the TV, let in light. The head has matching modern sinks; the shower is behind a large glass door. Blue and white tile abounds. As you leave the master, you can lift up the three stairs for extra stowage in a space large enough for several suitcases. On the way to the galley a cabinet holds the washer and dryer. The VIP stateroom is opposite the



| RPM | KNOTS | GPH | RANGE | dB(A) |
|------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| 1000 | 10.4 | 11.0 | 851 | 62 |
| 1200 | 12.1 | 18.0 | 605 | 63 |
| 1400 | 14.1 | 28.0 | 453 | 65 |
| 1600 | 18.0 | 37.0 | 437 | 68 |
| 1800 | 21.4 | 47.0 | 410 | 68 |
| 2000 | 25.3 | 60.0 | 380 | 68 |
| 2200 | 29.8 | 75.0 | 344 | 69 |
| 2350 | 32.5 | 88.0 | 332 | 75 |

TEST CONDITIONS: (Test conducted by manufacturer in Owls Head Bay near Rockland, Maine): Air temperature: 22°F; seas: less than 1'; load: 975 gal. fuel, 300 gal. water, 15 persons, 500 lb. gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/ Garmin GPS display. GPH taken via Garmin/Volvo Penta display. Range is based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels measured at the helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.