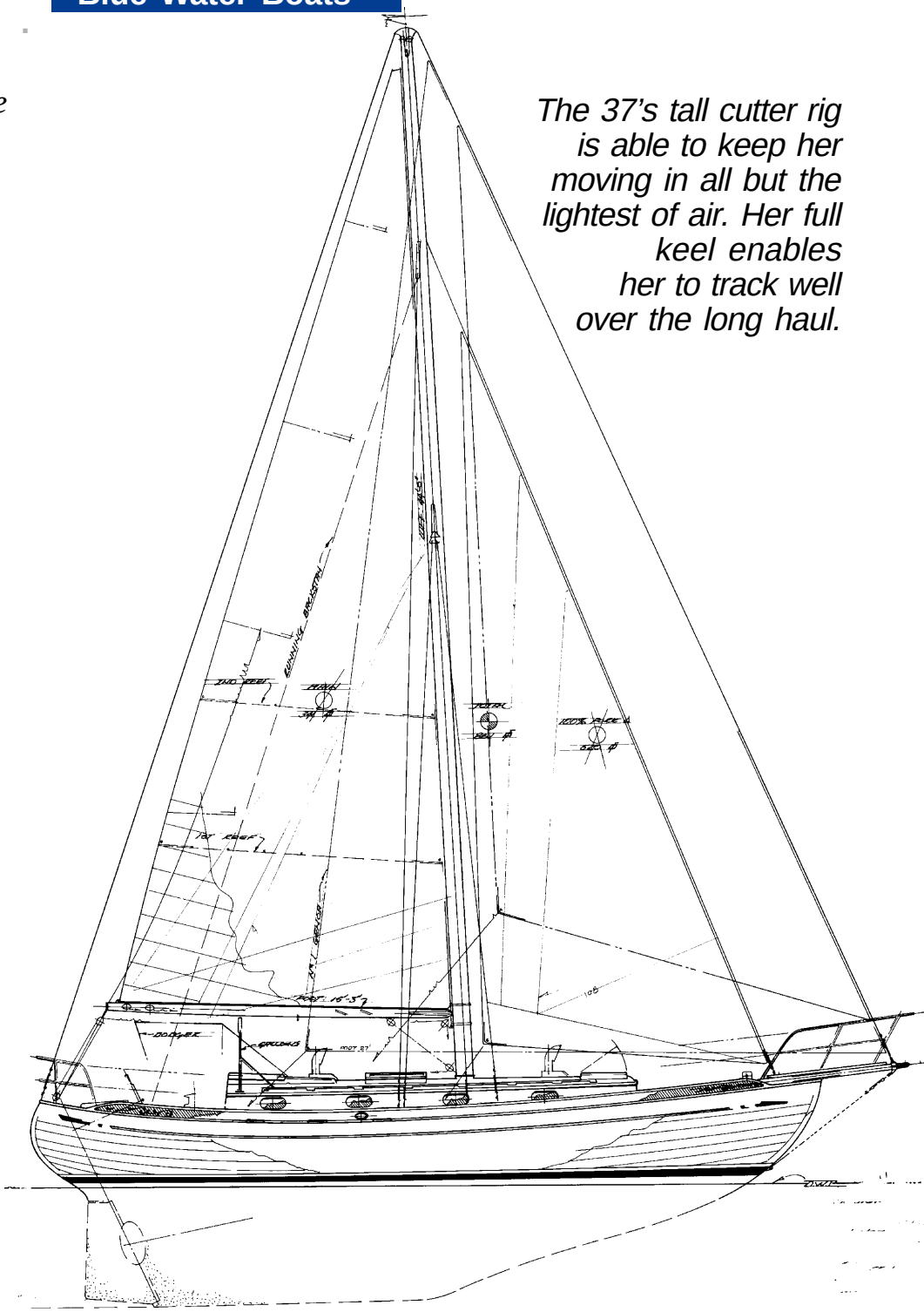
# Tayana 37

*A true passagemaker from the board of Bob Perry*

At the downwind start of the informal race between Puerto Sherry and Huelva, Spain, the Tayana 37 cutter popped its chute and surged across the line in second place, crawling up the backside of a hot J-44, much to the surprise and chagrin of the 44's crew. Surprise? Full-keeled double-enders aren't supposed to do this sort of thing. Chagrin? You don't shell out a quarter of a million dollars to be shown up (albeit temporarily) by an $80,000 cruising boat. Sure (we say modestly), brilliant helmsmanship and sail handling played a role in our 15 minutes of fame that day, but inspired cruising boat design was the greatest factor.

While the 37 might appear to some as slightly matronly above the waterline, below it she flaunts some design modifications that make her surprisingly quick on all points of sail. The Tayana 37's designer, Bob Perry, deviated from traditional North Sea double-ender design by replacing the outboard rudder with an inboard rudder, narrowing the bilges and cutting away the forefoot, thereby reducing displacement. "I made a distinct canoe body with no attempt to fair it into the keel," Perry says. "I did this by whacking away the hollow wineglass-section garboard and giving it a modern tuck." To this mix, he added a tall rig and a large sail area (861 sq. ft.), and the result was a vessel that not only exudes seagoing swagger, but also can back it up with inspired performance.

Why the tumblehome canoe stern? Aesthetics. Simple aesthetics and marketing. According to Perry, back in the '70s people were convinced that an offshore cruising boat should be double-ended. Then a photo of the Aage Nielsen-designed *Holger Danske* appeared on the cover of *Soundings*, "and both the Hans Christian and Valiant people decided that that



*The 37's tall cutter rig is able to keep her moving in all but the lightest of air. Her full keel enables her to track well over the long haul.*

## Tayana 37

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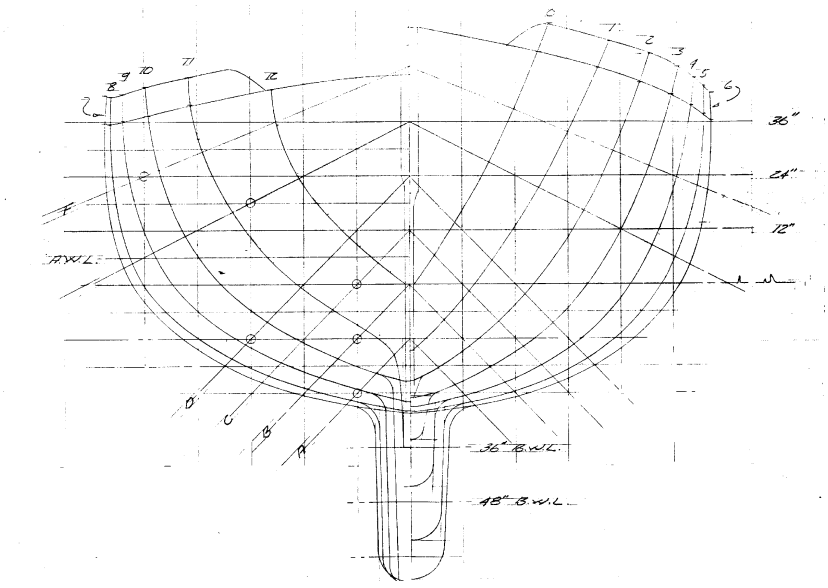
| LOA | 36'8" | Sail Area | |
| LWL | 31'0" | Cutter | 861 sq. ft. |
| Beam | 11'6" | Ketch | 768 sq. ft. |
| Displ. | 22,500 lbs. | D/L | 337 |
| Ballast | 7,340 lbs. | SA/D | 17.3 |
| Draft | 5'8" | B/D | 36% |

was the stern they wanted." The drawbacks to this design are a shorter sailing length due to the pinched-in stern, which reduces hull speed, and a loss of immersed volume when you heel, which results in a loss of stability. However, a well-designed double-ender produces symmetrical sailing lines fore and aft when heeled, which enhance performance.

The neat thing about the Tayana 37 is that it provides the Seven League Boots to take us — safely, comfortably and with all deliberate speed — to the four corners of the earth at a truly affordable price. Billed as the most popular offshore cruising boat of all time (close to 600 have come down the ways since 1975), the 37 still can be bought new from the Taiwanese builder, Ta Yang. Yet, at any given time, there are several pre-owned 37s on the market, usually loaded with offshore gear, ranging in price from $70,000 to $100,000. Back in '75, the introductory price was $45,000.

## Design Concept

The Tayana 37 was one of Bob Perry's responses to the popular, yet sluggish, Westsail 32 ("Everything was a response to the thirty-two in those days," quipped Perry), which sparked an ocean cruising mini-revolution back in the early '70s. Having designed the breakthrough Valiant 40 in 1973, Perry knew that a boat could look traditional and, at the same time, perform well on all points of sail. What makes the 37 so successful is that it affords an ocean-going home for a couple, a crew of three friends or a small family, that is capable of logging efficient passages with minimal wear and tear on boat and crew alike. The boat is not particularly stiff (full sail is carried until 18 knots or so), but the initial tenderness, Perry says, reduces snap from rolling and contributes to an easy motion in a seaway that keeps crews happy, rested and fresh. The 37's short waterline (31') and traditional appearance belie noon-to-noons of 140 to 160 miles in winds over 20 knots, 120 to 130 miles in 15- to 20-knot winds, and 100 to 110 miles in 10 to 15 knots.



*How do you make a full-keel double-ender faster? You cut away the wineglass sections of the garboards and narrow the bilges.*

Hank Schmitt, who completed an Atlantic Circle in Hull No. 395 (built in 1984) in the early '90s, adds: "Under ten knots, enjoy a good book and relax." Read: The Tayana 37 is not a boat for Long Island Sound in the summer, or any other body of water on which wind is at a premium. Nor is she a racing boat, yet Hank's 37 won a round-the-buoys race off Long Island, during which the wind gusted to 35, by an entire leg! People who have sailed long distances in the 37 say that the boat tracks well and willingly accepts the steady mechanical hand of a windvane or autopilot.

The Tayana 37's displacement/length ratio of 337 – nearly 100 less than the Westsail 32's 435 – equates to excellent live-aboard capabilities. With the relatively high D/L, the Tayana 37 can carry 100 gallons of fuel and 150 gallons of water, plus all the gear, spare parts, tools and provisions necessary for an extended voyage, and still sail on her lines. The sail area/displacement ratio of 17.3 is moderately high, suggesting a sail plan that can keep the boat moving in relatively light air. Her moderate ballast/displacement ration of 36% is an indicator of her easy motion in a seaway.

## Construction

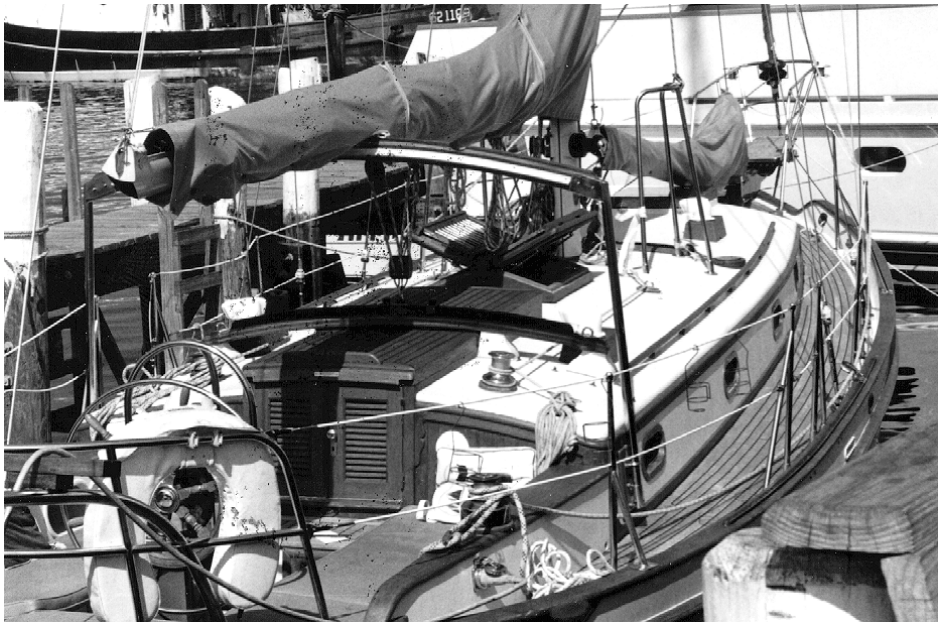
The Tayana 37 has the same laminate schedule as the earlier Valiant 40. The hull is solid fiberglass, "three-eighths of an inch thick at the sheer," according to Perry, who adds that "there never have been any consistent structural problems." The deck is balsa-core, which means that prospective buyers should check for delamination wherever the core has been violated by fastenings and fittings. The high and beefy hollow bulwarks are a structural member of the hull-deck joint, which is therefore particularly strong. On older 37s, there were occasional complaints of leaks at the scuppers and hawsepipes. The bulwarks on more recent 37s have been glassed from the inside, and reports of leaks have been minimal ever since. More than six tons of cast-iron ballast are encapsulated in the keel. While an externally ballasted keel initially takes the ground better, internal ballast eliminates any chance of keel-bolts being sheered and opening a mortal wound in the hull.

According to Perry, there are two deck versions out there: the MK I and the MK II. The MK I, designed by Perry, is the most prevalent. The MK II, designed by Ta Yang, is, according

to Perry, "a far nicer deck – prettier, more crown and a better cockpit." The cockpit in both deck layouts is small, yet dry (especially when protected by a dodger), comfortable and secure with high coamings, and with insufficient volume to be affected by the occasional greenie dumped into it. The house is low and not likely to catch the full brunt of a wave. Companionways are often fitted with attractive louvered doors, which some buyers might want to change to stronger and more versatile hatch boards.

Teak decks predominate and provide super footing on well-designed decks, although they have been replaced on many 37s because of their high maintenance. A 37 without teak decks could be a real find, because a major overhaul or replacement could thus be avoided. The side decks are wide and, coupled with high bulwarks and substantial lifelines, make one feel secure when moving around the boat. The forward deck, with club staysail, samsom-post, bowsprit butt, hatch and anchor windlass can be cramped, but that's one reason why you have a self-tending staysail and roller-furling jib. So can the aft deck when rigged with a windvane and festooned with such accouterments as Life-Slings, strobes, flagstaffs, propane tanks and seagoing barbecues, plus the backstay. But this tightness fore and aft is truly a small price to pay for a boat that will take care of itself and its crew for many miles at a time in almost any kind of weather.

Perry says that he takes a lot of flak for fuel tanks positioned in the forepeak, where weight is traditionally and rightly discouraged. "I had nothing to do with this," he says. "This was a decision made at the yard." Perry's design had the fuel tank low and amidships in the keel. Most of the original fuel and water tanks were black iron and had to be sand-blasted and repainted or replaced with aluminum or stainless steel tanks. According to Perry, the Number One victims of attrition in pre-owned Tayana 37s are the black-iron tanks, especially the water tanks which were subject to rust. But all older 37s should be inspected closely for corrosion and electrolysis wherever metal parts are in contact with salt water; e.g., thru-hulls, rudder-strapping and shoes, and the like. Water tanks are often located amidships under the settees.



*The 37's side decks are wide and made even more secure by high stanchions and bulwarks. The cockpit is small and seamanlike, yet snug and comfortable.*

## Rig

Less than 20 37s were given ketch rigs; the balance were delivered as cutters because, Perry says, "back in the '70s, everyone gravitated to the cutter, because it was the *rig de jour*." Perry regrets that so few ketches were ordered. "The very first thirty-seven I ever sailed was a ketch," Perry says warmly while studying a photo of the boat that hangs on his office wall. "I was impressed. The ketch is a far better sailing boat than the cutter. It's perfectly balanced, incredibly forgiving, and amazingly fast."

The classic cutter rig includes mainsail, club staysail and high-cut yankee. The minimal sail inventory is probably these three sails, plus a good sail repair kit and a commitment to reef early/reef often. A full-blown spinnaker or cruising chute is a nice addition to the inventory that takes up very little locker space. Over the years, the cutter rig has been plagued by weather helm, a shortcoming that was born of Perry's desire to produce a true cutter with a large foretriangle and a raked mast. "I thought it was unacceptable, and wanted to move the mast forward," Perry admits. "But dealers thought I was trying to ruin the design, and I deferred." At that time, Perry visited one Tayana's top dealers in San Francisco and suggested that it was amazing he was able to sell so many 37's considering the weather helm. "What weather helm?" the dealer responded. "We take the rake out of the masts, which corrects the helm."

Hank Schmitt has not experienced detrimental weather helm on his 37 and says that the cutter sail plan presents numerous combinations that enable you to balance the boat in most any conditions. As mentioned earlier, the conventional 37 wisdom has full sail carried until 18 knots or so, single-reefed main and staysail between 20 and 25, with the yankee rolled up. "Some people try to sail with a big genoa and main, but this doesn't work well," says Schmitt. "Stick with a high-cut yankee and use all three sails whenever possible." Over tens of thousands of offshore miles, Schmitt has grown to love

the club staysail, not only for its self-tacking ability, but also "because I like to vang it out on long sails."

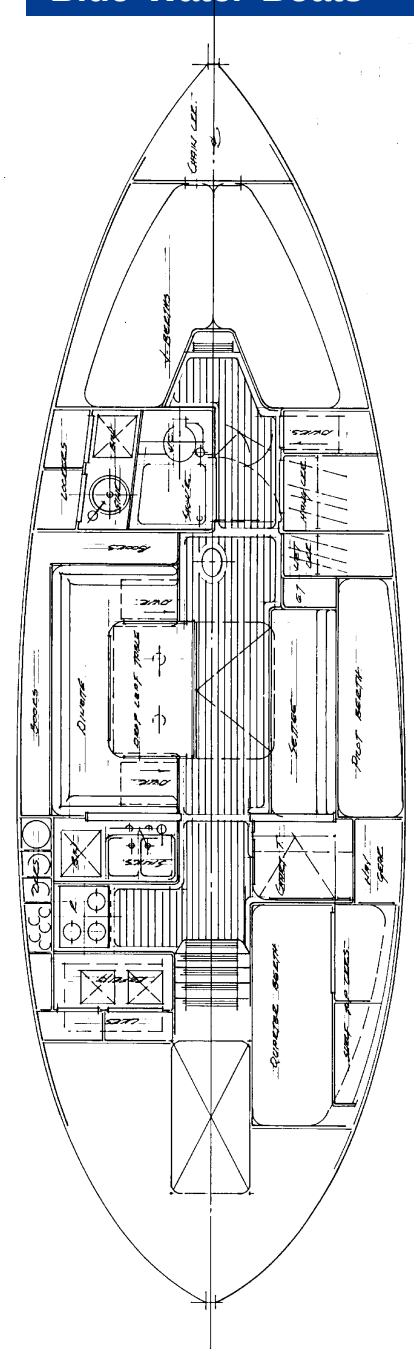
The 37 sails effectively to windward, but excels off the wind, especially on a broad reach. The trades? "She loves them," says Hank. "I wish I were there now."

Tayana 37s built in the 1970s often were delivered with spruce box-section spars. Dry rot is always a threat to wood spars, especially if not properly and periodically maintained, thus aluminum spars are far more desirable. Most Tayana 37 owners conducted love/hate relationships with their bowsprits. They look great and they move the headstay forward and, as Schmitt says, "make the sail plan work." And they are great places to hang the anchors while coastal cruising. But being laminated mahogany, they are susceptible to dry rot wherever fastenings are introduced. Often one, and sometimes two, laminates have to be replaced. Some Tayanas have painted sprits. Beware of these, because the ravages of dry rot may be masked by the coating. The obligatory gallows frame is, as always, nice – a secure place to stow the boom and a strongpoint to lean on and clip into.

## Interior

The Tayana 37 is a semi-custom boat, and we have never seen two interiors that were exactly the same. We have seen some interiors that were simply inappropriate for a seagoing boat. Truth is, many people who ordered new Tayanas did not have the knowledge to make the choices that were required of them, and either made bad choices or tried to fit too much into a hull already restricted by its design. Some interiors are brilliant for ocean cruising, with dedicated nav-stations, large chart tables, seagoing galleys, large dinette tables that fold away to nothing, handholds where you need them, lots of locker and drawer space and nothing but sea berths. Some have separate shower stalls, which are unnecessary and take up space on a passagemaking 37. There probably is a Tayana 37 interior out there for just about anybody if you look hard enough.

There are also some interiors that will require expensive alterations to make them usable for blue water purposes. Prospective buyers will have to shop carefully with the intended use of the boat clearly in mind.



*In this layout, sea berths abound, with a quarter-berth, pilot berth and traditional settees. Note the seagoing galley and compact nav station.*

## Retrofitting For Voyaging

Applying the *BWS* retrofit formula of 20% of purchase price, we have a budget of roughly $16,000 to bring our used Tayana 37 up to spec for blue water cruising.

*Sails:* Add a storm trysail ($1,200) and storm staysail ($2,000) to take the strain off boat and crew in an extended big blow and provide backup.

*Self-steering:* Wind vane ($3,500); Autopilot ($750)

*Safety gear:* Refurbished 4-man liferaft ($800); EPIRB ($240), bailout bag ($200); high-output manual bilge pump ($200); drogue ($300); radar reflector ($150); jacklines, port and starboard ($50); kerosene anchor light for safe anchoring off busy thoroughfares in remote regions ($150).

*Ground tackle:* Spare 300-foot nylon rode (3/4" or larger) with 50 feet of chain ($250); spare 35-lb. Plough ($500); large lightweight aluminum collapsible storm anchor ($400).

*Electrical:* New batteries, 440 amp-hours on house bank and 115 on starter bank ($650); high-output alternator ($300); 3-step regulator ($160).

*Electronics:* Built-in GPS with cockpit repeater ($600); hand-held GPS ($200), mast-mounted 16-mile radar ($1,700); refurbished SSB/Ham transceiver, tuner and antenna ($900).

*Miscellaneous:* Cockpit dodger ($1,500), lee cloths and weather cloths ($200); awning and bimini ($1,000); wind scoops ($50); spare compass ($75); plastic sextant and tables ($170).

That's just under $18,000, so with a total of less than $100,000 you'll have a real bargain when amortized over tens of thousands of easy sea miles.