

The Legacy 32 underway, Walstrom Marine of Harbor Springs, Michigan will carry the boat (877-245-9696; WALSTROM.COM).



Tartan's Legacy

When I was a kid just getting into sailing, I dreamed of navigating around the world in a Tartan 27. The lines of this keen — but stout — 27-footer were drawn in 1960 by famed yacht design firm Sparkman & Stephens. The Tartan 27 also was a wildly popular sailboat for a company that, until then, had primarily been a builder of small racing dinghies, such as Thistles and International 14s. The 27 was, for all intents and purposes, the boat that put the Tartan name on the sailboat-builder map.

Though not officially known as Tartan Marine until 1974, the Ohio-based boatbuilding company behind the Tartan name introduced many successful sailboat designs after that first 27, including such iconic designs as the Tartan 30 and 34. Other popular models would follow, including the Tartan Ten, Tartan 37 and one of my favorites, the Tartan 41. The company developed a well-deserved reputation not just for excellent craftsmanship and quality, but also for building fast, seaworthy and capable sailboats.

Downturn expansion

Fast-forward to 2009. The Great Recession was in full effect, putting much of the worldwide marine industry in the crosshairs of financial trouble. Well-known builders were closing their doors at an alarming rate, while others were forced to merge with their competitors just to survive. Tartan (then Tartan/C&C) was no different. After a

string of very bullish years, the company was forced to scale back its operations to only a skeleton staff and hope for the best. But it was in this recession when the company saw an opportunity to expand and diversify into a segment of the boating industry that was weathering the worldwide economic storm better than most: The powerboat market.

Tartan had been in discussions to purchase the Legacy powerboat brand (once part of Freedom Yachts) for years, and while acquiring another boat brand during a recession seems counterintuitive, the recession actually catalyzed making the deal a reality. Just as the Legacy purchase was being finalized, investment banker Stephen Malbasa and his wife, Stephanie — new Tartan 4300 owners — expressed an interest in buying the company. By 2010, the Malbasa's had purchased Tartan/C&C, the Legacy powerboat molds were moved to Ohio, and the company was set in a new direction. The C&C brand was sold to USWatercraft in 2014. Tartan/C&C became Tartan Yachts and Legacy became Legacy Yachts by Tartan.

New and improved

Interested in this new fossil-fueled direction Tartan took, I decided to catch up with Tim Jackett, whose first job was at Tartan Yachts in 1978, and where he went on to design many of the company's most successful boats. Today he is the director of Legacy Yachts by Tartan, which is currently building the Legacy 32, with two more models — the Legacy 36 and 42 — in the works.

It's probably fitting that Tartan decided to launch the Legacy 32 first, as Freedom built 49 of the hulls in its



The Legacy 32 features a rich and luxurious helm deck with extraordinary handcrafted woodwork — something Tartan is famous for.



The handcrafted woodwork theme continues below, on the Legacy 32. Pictured here is the port-side galley and companionway.



Legacy powerboats are built right alongside Tartan sailboats in the manufacturer's Fairport Harbor, Ohio, factory. Here, a Legacy 32 hull is being pulled from the mold.

With 50-plus years of building premium sailing craft under its belt, Tartan diversifies its portfolio with power.

BY GARY REICH

first two and a half years of production. Re-launched last year, this gorgeous Downeast express cruiser has beautiful lines, a rich interior and impressive performance, with a 25.4-knot top end and an efficient, 17.2-knot cruise when equipped with a single, 420-horsepower Cummins diesel (a 380-horsepower Cummins diesel is standard). It's such a successful and praised design that Tartan could have simply reproduced what Freedom had originally built.

But instead of simply rebuilding from the molds that it had acquired in the purchase, Tartan decided to make extensive improvements to the already capable Legacy 32.

"Our design staff has reviewed and updated the entire systems layout of the 32, and we also made a mid-stream decision to re-tool the deck to provide some improved fit between components and provide proper service access to all of the major engine room components," Jackett says. "We've also made changes to the helm deck area, swapping out the old fiberglass box seats in favor of ultraleather captain's chairs. The helm deck and exterior are being finished in solid stock Sapelle, an elegant African hardwood. The interior will showcase Tartan's renowned handcrafted woodwork."

Designs of the future

The Legacy 32 is built alongside Tartan sailboats at the company's Fairport Harbor, Ohio, facility, only a stone's throw (if you've got a good arm) from Lake Erie. Tartan's Legacy 36 and 42 models, expected to enter production this year, also will be built here. It turns out the factory is a perfect fit for Tartan's new powerboat line.

"That was one of the strong appeals of the Legacy line: The lamination is identical to Tartan; the woodworking is vintage Tartan; and the systems acumen that has been developed in larger Tartans provides a nice crossover," Jackett says.

Inside every Legacy powerboat you'll find a resin-infused hull, deck and stringer structures with PVC foam coring and multi-directional fiberglass cloths laminated with epoxy modified vinyl ester resin. All Legacy powerboats come with a standard, 15-year structural and blister warranty.

While the first two Legacy 32s near completion, the company

is working feverishly on its next two models: An all-new 36-footer, and a 42-footer based on Freedom's previous tooling. Tartan hopes to introduce the two new boats later this year.

"The Legacy 36 is a collaboration between Mark Ellis, myself and the Tartan design team," Jackett says. "The hull is Mark's, while the exterior styling and general arrangement plan is a collaboration. So like most boats, it's a design partnership using the skills of a group of designers and engineers. The Legacy 42 is largely the same as previously built, although there are updates to systems and the interior styling that will reflect a Tartan interior build style, as opposed to the Freedom-built Legacy 42s. Things such as solid raised panel doors, solid stock cabinet faces, plugged trim details, and solid teak cabin soles will be some of the more evident changes."

Building for today's boater

Whom does Tartan hope will buy these classy Downeast cruisers?

"We have found an interesting range of people that are drawn to the Legacy 32," Jackett says. "One group is the sailor converting to power, and, contrary to most discussions, it's not necessarily an older sailor moving to power. Many are younger boaters that see power as a lifestyle on the water that fits better with the time constraints of their home and professional life."

There's another group that comes from the powerboat side that simply find the efficiency and style of a Downeast cruising yacht appealing, and again there is a segment of this group that is a little older and looking to downsize, without giving up the luxury associated with a premium build," he adds.

Famous National Hockey League coach Scotty Bowman once said, "I found out that if you are going to win games, you had better be ready to adapt." Well, when it comes to the game of survival, it seems Tartan has that adaptability down to a science. And it feels as if Jackett couldn't be more eager for the future.

"I'm excited about what the combination of Legacy and Tartan offers for the company," Jackett says. "Until sail makes a comeback, I think it's the combined opportunities of power and sail that will allow both Tartan and Legacy to evolve and develop in a way that offers its existing and future enthusiasts a great way to enjoy a boating lifestyle." ★

A Legacy 42 glides gracefully across the water. The Legacy 42 will formally launch later this year.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LEGACY BY TARTAN