

Foul play

Our season-long test on 12 antifouls cultivates some interesting results

REPORT BY MARK TURLEY



It's time to don those overalls, dig out those encrusted paint trays and procure yourself a supply of cheap, never-to-be-used-again brushes to splash the antifouling on.

If you're not fan of this procedure, then you have my sympathy. For the

purposes of this test, I was tasked with giving the hull of MBM's company boat *Blue Fin* – a Prestige 390S – a striped makeover of 12 individual paints in order to assess, over a season's use, which one antifouling product would prove to be the best.

The paints themselves were as recommended by the manufacturers for a 30-knot boat, usually cruised at nearer 22 knots and with an average of 100 hours motoring logged during the season.

What we ended up with was a useful and representative mix of self-polishing and hard antifoul varieties. The basic difference is that the self-polishing or eroding type is geared to wear away through the year. This process not only exposes fresh biocide but also means paint build-up year-on-year is minimal. The downside with this paint technology is that the antifoul can erode too quickly, especially where boats are pushed along consistently at speeds in the mid-and high 20s.

In these circumstances the consensus is to move to a 'hard' coating that comprises an insoluble binding agent loaded with densely packed biocide. Here, only the latter dissolves and these coatings tend to work best when you can organise a mid-season scrub to remove the

depleted paint film and expose a refreshed layer of biocide.

Hard or fast eroding

If, like *Blue Fin*, your boat can boast more than 30 knots but is usually cruised in the comfort zone of the low 20s, this choice might present something of a dilemma. From our experience, the eroding type is the usually the better option, especially if you are generous with it. If, however, you spend the bulk of the time hitting 25 knots and more – or have a mooring that dries and therefore really needs a hard-wearing paint – then you are better off using a hard variety.

Finally, if you are wondering why there are no Blakes products in our trial or in the chandlers, that is because it now comes under the Hempel name. Two other names that you might find on the shelves in 2012 are Flag and Seago. We have looked at Flag's semi-hard Performance Extra (good for 35



We immersed a static test panel of the 12 antifoul paints into the West Solent



FOULING LEVELS

MBM test terminology

Light Thin, sporadic layer of slime

Medium Constant covering of fouling that is easy to clean off

Heavy A thick layer of fouling that would require effort to remove

NOTE ON RESULTS

The good news is that all the paints tested did what they said on the tin. And when you compare them to the control strips, which ended the season coated with extremely heavy slime and well adhered tufts of weed, there is little doubt as to their effectiveness. What was also noticeable was how the hull and board had been partially 'cleaned' here and there by fish conducting a bit of useful Hoovering (red coatings being the most popular). Perhaps an erodible paint with a taste that attracts these aquatic nibblers is the answer?

knots) in a previous trial which does a useful job and is reasonably priced. Unfortunately we haven't – as yet – been able to conduct a test of the Seago paints.

The test treatment

Before giving *Blue Fin* its bar code of antifouls, a barrier coat was applied to ensure the effects of any previous antifoul system was nullified. Manufacturers' instructions and coating thicknesses were adhered to (never try to spread antifouling paint too far), and a 'control' strip – without any antifouling – was left to see how bad things would get without any protection at all.

Blue Fin was based for the bulk



A barrier coat was first applied to *Blue Fin*

of the 2011 season on the south coast at Port Solent and Brighton marinas. A static test panel was also immersed at the Yacht Haven in Lympington in the west Solent.

We have mentioned where *Blue Fin* resided because different parts of the UK's coastline err towards different fouling problems and while one paint may offer good protection in one locality, it may give less beneficial results elsewhere. Call the manufacturer or quiz the local chandler and other boatowners to find what paint they think works best. Prices quoted are RRP where a manufacturer issues one, but we found practically all these paints at discounted prices and have given an idea of these, too.



PRICE
£107.50

Hempel Hard Racing

Type As its name suggests, the paintmatrix here is of the hard variety, being specifically formulated for powerboats and racing yachts that require a smooth hull finish. It is also well suited for vessels on drying berths.

Application It mixes and covers well.

Performance A light to medium slime on the hull with a heavier build-up on the static board.

Price £107.50 for 2.5lt, but we found it at 25% cheaper.

Enquiries Hempel UK Ltd
Tel: 023 8023 2000
www.hempel.co.uk



PRICE
£116.16

Nautix A3 Antifouling

Type Self-polishing, erodible antifoul for vessels running at sub-30 knots. The manufacturer claims the A3's 'white' tends not to turn yellow like some other paints, hence we tried it.

Application Quite a thin consistency, rather like egg-shell paint, that is easy to apply.

Performance Both the hull and the board had a fairly heavy deposit of slime, but nothing more. As claimed, the paint stayed a bright white colour.

Price £116.16 for 2.5lt.

Enquiries Marineware Tel: 023 8033 0208
www.marineware.com





PRICE
£79.99

Seajet 033 Shogun

Type Although a self-polishing type, it is good for 40 knots, according to Seajet, and by applying an extra coat it will last a couple of seasons.

Application Runny consistency but it still covers well.

Performance Some light slime on the hull around the waterline, while the planing surface was pretty clear. The board showed heavy deposits of slime, which shows these eroding types work best on the move.

Price £79.99 for 2.5lt.

Enquiries Marine & Industrial LLP
Tel: 01692 406822 www.seajet.com



PRICE
£89.92

Teamac Antifouling 'D'

Type An erodible antifouling paint that the manufacturer says is fine for boat speeds up to 20 knots.

Application Good consistency and coverage, but note that you should launch your boat within two weeks of applying the paint.

Performance We hadn't tried this make before but were impressed with the results. The hull showed very little slime build-up, even on the waterline, and again the board was particularly clean.

Price £89.92 for 2.5lt.

Enquiries Aquafax Ltd
Tel: 01582 568700
www.teamac.co.uk



PRICE
£87.93

Plastimo Racing Antifouling

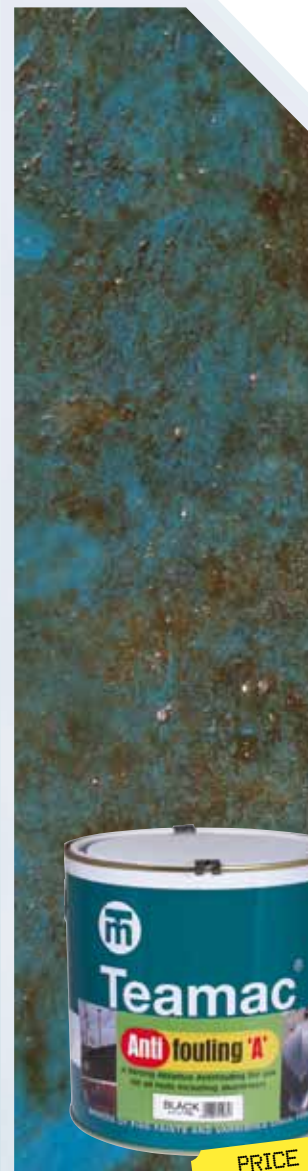
Type Blows the theory about erodible paints out of the water as the literature accompanying this product claims it is good for 70 knots!

Application Easy to mix and although rather thin, it covers well.

Performance Both the hull and the board had a heavy coating of slime, especially the latter, so this erodible job clearly benefits from being on the go.

Price Its recommended retail price is £87.93, but we found it at £77.13 for a 2.5lt tin.

Enquiries Navimo
Tel: 0870 751 4666
www.navimogroup.com



PRICE
£89.92

Teamac Antifouling 'A'

Type Erodible paint that contains a 'special' form of copper, so it is safe to use on aluminium. Used on high-speed commercial catamarans, so good for 25 knots plus.

Application Thin and a bit dribbly but it still covered well. Boat needs to be immersed within a couple of weeks of paint application.

Performance Although two coats were applied, it showed signs of wearing through on the hull, which had a medium weight film of slime. Board was coated in a heavy slime.

Price £89.82 for 2.5lt.

Enquiries Aquafax Ltd Tel: 01582 568700 www.teamac.co.uk





PRICE
£114.99

Seajet 039 Platinum

Type A hard antifoul paint where you have to mix the separate powder component prior to use. Claims to provide three-year protection when a suitable number of coats are built up.

Application Requires a thorough mixing due to the powder component and once added, the paint must be used within 36 hours.

Performance Oddly, the hull had a slightly more thorough build-up of slime than the board, although neither could be classified more than light to medium in thickness.

Price £114.99 for 2lt.

Enquiries Marine & Industrial LLP
Tel: 01692 406822 www.seajet.com



PRICE
£94.95

Hempel Tiger Xtra

Type Self-polishing type with the advantage that you could get away with just one coat.

Application The one-coat coverage is hard work to apply because of its thick, glue-like consistency.

Performance This antifoul liked to be on the move and the hull had only a light film of slime, whereas there was a heavy build-up on the static board.

Price RRP £94.95 for 2.5lt but we found it with a third off.

Enquiries Hempel UK Ltd
Tel: 023 8023 2000
www.hempel.co.uk



PRICE
£144.78

Nautix A4 T.Speed

Type A hard matrix antifoul paint suitable for high-speed applications where a mid-season wash and brush up is likely.

Application A thinnish consistency but it gave good coverage.

Performance The board showed quite a heavy, thorough coating of slime, while the hull fared better with less of a build-up that we categorised as medium and it was readily cleaned off.

Price £144.78 for 2.5lt.

Enquiries Marineware
Tel: 023 8033 0208
www.marineware.com



PRICE
£89.95

International Trilux 33

Type Described as 'slow polishing' by the manufacturer, it will not disappear as readily as an eroding paint and is therefore a contender for high-speed craft. Does not contain any copper, so it's also suitable for use on aluminium hulls.

Application Good consistency, easy to apply and covers well.

Performance A fairly heavy build-up of slime on both board and hull.

Price No fixed price; we found it at £89.95 to £99.99 for 2.5lt.

Enquiries International Paint
Tel: 01489 775050
www.yachtpaint.com





XM PX4000

Type A hard type of antifoul suitable for fast craft and those that may dry out.

Application A thick paint that covers well but takes some work.

Performance Another example of where the static board fared slightly better than the hull, which in itself had a modicum build up of slime but nothing worse.

Price 'Usual' price for a 3lt tin is £86.50, but you can easily find it at the mid-£60 mark.

Enquiries Navimo
Tel: 0870 751 4666,
www.navimogroup.com



International Cruiser Uno

Type A one-coat-per-season self-polishing antifoul that is good for 25 knots.

Application Good consistency, which makes it easy to apply a coat that should last the season.

Performance There was a light to medium weight film of slime on the hull, a little more on the board.

Price The best value paint on test. International does not set prices, but we found it from £59.95 to £74.99 for 3lt. It pays to shop around.

Enquiries International Paint
Tel: 01489 775050
www.yachtpaint.com



Mark examines the slime build-up on *Blue Fin*

CONCLUSION

Our trials clearly demonstrate that spending a weekend antifouling is not the thankless task it's often believed to be.

No one product tested was markedly better or worse than the rest, but one conclusive finding was the improvement in self-polishing paints, which clearly have the edge when a boat sees plenty of use. A fact that is reflected in our top three antifouls.

For general use, Cruiser Uno is, as ever, hard to beat when comparing effectiveness against price and ease of application. But other products did impress – especially when the price is right. Teamac's 'D' product looks a good bet for sub-20 knot craft while Seajet's reliable 033 Shogun offers superb protection up to speeds of 40 knots.



Washing the slime off our static test panel – which paint was the most effective?