

# BoatCheck Owners Review:

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Pearson 26 is a fin keel masthead sloop with 321 sf of sail area, 5400 lbs displacement, 4 foot draft, 8.75 foot beam and 21.6 foot waterline. The SA/D is 16.6, the D/L is 237 and the ballast ratio is 40. The mast height off the water is 35 ft. Most of them are outboard powered. Production started in 1970 and ended in 1982 with more then 1700 built. The P26 Weekender was made in 75 & 76, renamed the P26 One Design for 78 and made to 83. They had a larger cockpit and smaller cabin with the same hull and rig. I think about 400 were made.

## STRENGTHS

The P26 is a well built, stout boat with a solid glass hull and deck stepped rig. I have never noticed any "oil-canning" or hull flexing under loads. The standing rigging is 1x19 wire and each piece is one size larger then the corresponding piece on a Cal 25. The mainsail is 137 sf and does not power the boat very well by itself. You don't need to reef the main until the wind is up in the high teens to low 20s. The helm is easily balanced with the right sail combination. I have been out in 20-25 knots with a full main and working jib (90%) and the tiller was very light with just a bit of weather-helm that was easily adjusted with mainsail trim. I think the P26 is a fairly stiff boat, much stiffer then the Cal 25 I got a ride on. It's not very fast in light air by current standards but does well when compared to contemporary (early 1970's) designs. I have had the boat surfing dead down wind with a spinnaker in 10-15 knots with 3-5 foot waves at sustained speeds of 7 knots occasionally hitting 8.5 (Honest!). Our highest speed was 10.3 running 150 degrees apparent in 20-30 knots with 2-4 footers flying the full main and a 130% genoa. These speeds are pretty unusual. Typically we can make hull speed with 7-10 knots of wind and our 170% close reaching which is the boats fastest point of sail. The J dimension on the boat is large for a 26 footer (11.6 feet) and I think this would make it a good candidate for an asymmetrical spinnaker. It would certainly help in light air and off the wind.

## WEAKNESSES

The rudder bearings are a weak point and should be carefully inspected at regular intervals - especially the bottom one. early P26s had aluminum ruder shafts that can be worn down. The rudder is very heavy which probably contributes to the wear on the lower bearing. Watch out for DE-lamination in the cockpit sole. The OEM Genoa track does not go far enough forward to properly sheet any but the largest (>150%) head sails. I replaced mine with 14' sections and the boat points 5-10 deg higher with the smaller sails. The electrical system is inadequate. There was no battery switch from the factory (on ours at least) and the wiring was non-tinned. Re-wiring the feeds to the mast step was a difficult job requiring disassembly of the main bulkheads and compression posts. This was straight forward (no glass cutting, just unbolting) but time consuming. It is also difficult to rewire the interior lights - the wires run above the headliner. I don't think the wiring is any worse then other boats from the 1970's. The OEM drain in the engine well was 1/2" and perpetually clogged. I glassed in a 1.5" tube. The cockpit of the P26 is about 6 feet long and is a bit small for more then 3 people. The tiller takes up a lot of space and the boom is in head banging range. Of course, it is a 26 foot boat. The space is very good for 2 people and good for 3.

## **OVERALL IMPRESSIONS**

We are extremely happy with our P26. We looked at a lot of other boats and think we got more for our money with the Pearson. It held up much better than Catalina's and Hunter's of the same vintage that we looked at, partly because it was well cared for but mostly, I think, because it was better built. The longer we have it the more we think we chose the right boat. I have made many modifications to improve performance and livability. These include longer Genoa tracks, in-boom 4:1 outhaul, in-boom topping lift, additional locker space, 2nd battery, re-wiring, enlarged engine well drain, and new bottom.