

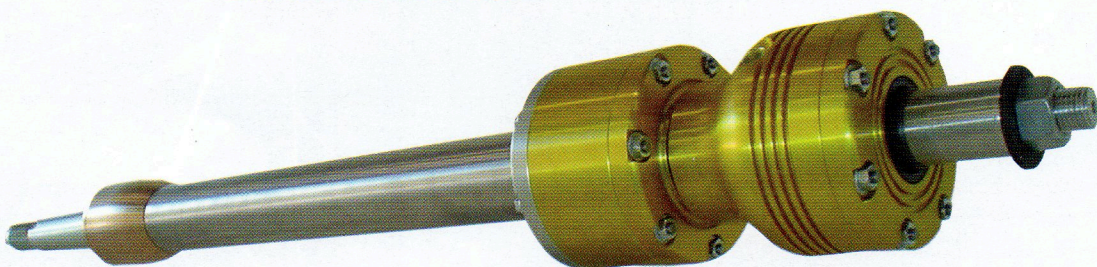
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Winner's enclosure

ALREADY SUCCESSFUL IN THE US, SEATORQUE IS LOOKING TO CONQUER THE GLOBAL MARKET WITH A NEW ZEALAND-DESIGNED NEW-BUILD ABOUT TO BE COMPLETED IN AFRICA

DENNIS O'NEILL REPORTS



Seatorque's enclosed drive-shaft system won awards at METS and IBEX

Global marketing is always made easier when you win a prestigious international award.

So, when Seatorque's enclosed drive-shaft system was a winner at both METS and IBEX in 2006, the company knew it had a window of opportunity to push the product into new territories.

Work began immediately to establish distributors worldwide and new business has now been established in the UK, Lithuania, Egypt and South Africa.

It's a strategy that has given the design a phenomenal commercial boost.

"For more than 20 years we were basically supplying to offshore sportsfishers in the US who are always looking to reduce vibration and noise," explains Jana Stolper, vice president of Seatorque Control Systems based in Florida.

"But since winning the awards everything has just taken off. We've found a very

positive response for our product from all around the world and the weak dollar has been very good for us, too.

"More interestingly, though, is that we've been finding the system is appealing increasingly to the more progressive teams of engineers and designers around the globe."

Less noise, more drive

Clear evidence of this is to be found in Egypt where the construction of *Tatami* — a 27m (88ft) wave-piercing trimaran designed by New Zealander Craig Loomes — is now in the final stages.

Designed to be 'the ultimate liveaboard passage maker' for a Mediterranean client, Loomes has created a three and a half deck motor yacht that integrates a conventional monohull bow with out-rider hulls.

The goal has been to achieve the stability and efficiency of

The retro-fit market will be important. Projects this year have already included a retro-fit in Ireland

a catamaran along with the smooth blue-water ride of one his famed wave-piercers.

Powered by twin V12 Caterpillar diesels and equipped with carbonfibre propellers, it's hoped that *Tatami* will have a maximum speed of around 35kts and be capable of trans-Atlantic crossings.

As an alternative to a conventional shaft set up — with its inherent problems of alignment, vibration and noise — the Seatorque system is simply an enclosed rigid

drivetrain where thrust loads are taken through a bulkhead at the shaft-hull junction and the engine is free to move on softer mounts which should benefit from longer lives.

From the engineer's point of view Seatorque promises easier and quicker installation, less individual components to deal with (no stuffing boxes, stern glands or cutless bearings, for instance), and no need to re-design internal space.

"It's a modular BOSS package — a bolt-on shaft system,"

"We've had a very positive response from all over the world. The weak dollar has been good for us too"

Jana Stolper, Seatorque Control Systems' vice-president



Seatorque's drive-shaft will feature on *Tatami*, a 27m (88ft) trimaran designed by Craig Loomes and under construction in Egypt

explains Stolper. "The unit comes with everything in a pack — all the equipment you will need, from struts to universal joints."

In use, it's claimed that by eliminating water friction Seatorque will provide increased efficiency and top-end performance of around eight per cent, with no drivetrain noise or vibration, and much less maintenance.

Units are available in lengths of 1.2m (4ft) upwards in increments of 25mm (1in) up to a maximum of 5m (16ft) which, with a 150mm (6in) shaft, would work for a maximum output of 3,000hp.

Quick fitting

In the UK, Seatorque has appointed H4 Marine to spearhead its new distribution strategy across western Europe.

"Our job is to ensure we provide fully comprehensive sales and engineering support

for all Seatorque clients," says Neil Young, managing director of H4 Marine. "Beyond that, we will be helping push distribution throughout the European territory.

"So far we have found that the retro-fit market is going to be very important. Projects this year have already included a retro-fit yacht installation in Ireland."

Meanwhile in Cairo, *Tatami's* project manager, Philippe Maari, of Mapso Marine, is pleased with the vessel's progress — as well as the inclusion of the Seatorque system.

"We are very pleased with the engineering quality of the Seatorque unit," he says, "and we have found that installation is easy with no alignment issues. This project makes use of an epoxy-wood composite; it would have been very complicated with a conventional system lay-up. The Seatorque unit is quick to fit too. We connected it up

in less than two hours and, because it is self-aligning, it just bolted straight onto the flange.

Growing acceptance

"On this project we are also using carbon propellers, which are very light with low inertia — so, in combination, a carbon propeller with an enclosed shaft should make each unit so light that there will be very little vibration. In fact, we believe vibration is very unlikely to be an issue."

Maari adds that *Tatami* is due for completion in November now that its superstructure has been completed and engines dropped in.

All in all, Jana Stolper is delighted with Seatorque's growing acceptance in the large-yacht sector.

"We are now getting orders for boats up to 200ft (60m) and the pleasing thing is that, in the European market, engineers are now starting to designing around our product." ●

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