

## **St. Croix Company Builds Profitable, Fast Multihulls**

*By Debra Baukney*

Top speeds of 20 to 30 knots and single day runs of 360 miles are two of the fleet statistics of Gold Coast Yachts, a multihull manufacturing company based in St. Croix, which designs and builds progressive, inexpensive catamarans for the Caribbean day-charter trade.

Although ocean racing is commonly considered the test bed for multihull design progress, Richard A. Difede, president of Gold Coast, believes that workboats have historically pointed the way toward the development of performance in reliable, functional designs.

In the late 1960s, Caribbean charter captains recognized that the broad deck layout of multihulls were ideal for carrying passengers. Eager to promote their businesses, the charter companies began to push multihull design to the limits and rigorously tested each new concept in a range of conditions with full payloads.

Since founding Gold Coast Yachts in 1980, Difede and designer Roger Hatfield have earned a reputation for building high-quality commercial trimarans and catamarans that not only carry passengers, but also win races. Hatfield has sailed his own 34-foot Gold Coast trimaran, Hatter, to victory in several local regattas.

Gold Coast multihulls are unique in that they not only are designed for speed, but also sail efficiently and maneuver easily through an extremely wide range of conditions, an essential attribute of commercial sailing boats. Equipped with a bar and facilities for more than 60 passengers, the 65-foot Gold Coast catamaran *Sunny Days* has achieved speeds of 35 knots.

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