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Swan 36: the birth of a legend



The Swan 36 was a race winner when first launched – and still performs today. Photo: Peter Poland.

When Nautor's Swan launched its first boat, nothing was the same again.

The Swan 36 wasn't just fast: it was ruthless, ditching the full keel for a fin-and-rudder setup that left competitors choking on its wake.

When *Casse Tete II* swept [Cowes Week](#) in 1968, winning every race, the world took notice. This was the boat that established Swan's reputation for building elegant and fast boats that lasted.

The Finnish company Nautor was founded by Pekka Koskenkylä.

He partnered with the legendary naval architects Sparkman & Stephens, and together, they designed the Swan 36; hull number one splashing in 1967. She was the first production yacht from Nautor's and the first S&S design to be mass-produced in glassfibre.

Everything was overbuilt. Laminates were thicker than needed, hull-deck joints bolted and glassed, and chainplates through bulkheads. She was stiff. She was balanced. And she was fast in a way people did not expect.

A knife through history

Light at the helm, poised upwind and lithe downwind, when the breeze came on, the 36 did not flatten and cower; instead, she leaned in and asked for more.

She carried full sail when others [reefed](#), and she did it without drama.

In her first major outing, the 1968 Cowes Week, Swan 36s placed 1st, 2nd, and 4th in their class. The Royal Ocean Racing Club took note; everyone did.

By the early 1970s, Swan had become synonymous with excellence, and it started here.

Beneath the waterline she was radical: a fin keel with a separate skeg-hung rudder – a configuration that would become standard for decades.

The fin keel gave her lift and agility, letting her tack with a snap and point higher into the wind than her full-keel rivals.

The separated rudder, tucked behind the skeg, added control without the drag of a barn door. Together, they made her lighter on her feet, more responsive, and faster through the water. She didn't just sail well; she danced.

Today, Nautor's still builds Swans, bigger, sleeker, and more advanced, but many old hands still swear by the 36.

Who owns Swan 36s now?

Swan 36s have aged like old scotch: you won't find many on the market, and the ones you do find are rarely cheap.

They are labours of love, kept by sailors who can quote sail numbers like wedding anniversaries.

Depending on the condition and upgrades, a used Swan 36 will cost in the region of £35,000 to £90,000.

Despite her age, the Swan 36 still qualifies for classic yacht regattas, still sails across oceans, and still races under ORC and IRC rules in local fleets.

She is a living reminder that quality isn't a luxury; it is a philosophy.

Swan 36 specifications

LOA: 11.00m/36ft 0in

LWL: 7.77m/25ft 6in

Beam: 2.95m/9ft 8in

Draught: 1.80m/6ft 0in

Displacement: 7,000kg/15,400lb

Mainsail area: 21.3m²/229ft²

Jib/genoa area: 27.7m²/299ft²

Spinnaker area: 101m²/1,088ft²