

A Guide to buying a second-hand 420

On arrival ask to see the certificate, every 420 has one.

Determine the age of the boat, now check the certificate registration number against the plaque number in the hull, if these tie up registration is in order.

The next and most important step is to check for correctors, the certificate will tell you what correctors, if any, are fitted. Correctors on modern 420s are fitted to the transom but on earlier boats they were fitted under the thwart. If correctors are listed but not in place they have been removed illegally i.e. without the authority of an official measurer, who would issue a letter stating that the boat had been reweighed and the new weight should be recorded on the certificate.

Do not purchase until the seller has the certificate altered by the RYA.

Most boats gain weight after a season's hard racing; a one year old boat will probably gain one kg and a three year old boat probably two to two and a half kg. depending on after sailing care .

Many new boats are built up to minimum weight of 80kg at the client's request, whilst other clients like to see correctors. The advantage of a second hand boat with correctors is that the weight can be reduced by their removal .

Now for the construction check. Start with the tank to floor flanges to see if they are parting. If there are any signs of de-lamination then beware as this is a job for the professional. A cumbersome repair will be very evident.

Move to the gunwhales and check for parting of the hull-deck joint. If all is in order, check the stem head fitting for security - remember this anchorage takes a pounding and can work loose,

Look under the hull carefully and check for splits or bodged repairs especially in the vicinity of the centre board slot.

End of hull check

Check the foils for general wear and tear; they are indeed replaceable but expensive. Try to borrow a thickness gauge to check for maximum thickness of 20mm. Wood foils can fail on thickness but GRP foils from Nautivela are generally trouble free.

Spars should not be a problem as our British spars are all legal, watch out for missing black bands on masts and booms.

Sails should be checked for the correct numbers, and make sure that the spinnaker is numbered on both sides. The sails should be signed, by a measurer, near the tack and if so check the measurer's date. In this way you will be able to tell if the sails are from that boat or are re-numbered from an earlier boat.

Finally, if you buy, re-register the boat with the RYA when a new certificate will be issued in your name.

Don O'Donnell , 420 class and ISAF measurer.