OUR BOATS

Top tips from real boat owners in the MBY fleet

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Trying out Coppercoat

In search of a new antifoul solution, Greg Copp tries spray-on Coppercoat with speedy results

After Bright Spark's 2B Sure electrical antifouling failed to keep my newly epoxied hull free of weed and barnacles, I needed to find a different solution.

The obvious choice was to opt for a tried and tested antifouling paint such as International Hard Racing. The control patch I'd used to see how it fared against the 2B Sure system had worked a treat but would probably only last a year before needing another coat.

Then I heard about a new way of applying Coppercoat's well regarded long-term antifouling. By spraying their copper-epoxy mix, instead of rolling or painting it on by hand, they could achieve a super-smooth finish that would create less drag than the existing epoxy-painted hull. They even claimed that some Sunseeker owners reported performance gains of up to 1.8 knots over conventional antifouling paint.

It sounded almost too good to be true – a long-term antifouling that should last up to ten years, and a faster more efficient boat as well. There was only one way to find out.

Thankfully, I already had a recent set of performance figures for my boat, taken on the first day of its launch last season when the epoxy-coated hull was at its cleanest. Now all I needed to do was have it sprayed with Coppercoat and re-test it to see if their bold claims held water.

Coppercoat main agents Arc Antifoul quoted £1,800 inc VAT to treat my 43ft boat – approximately twice the cost of having it professionally painted with conventional antifouling. They normally charge an extra £350 for spraying rather than rolling but are currently offering to waive the premium for *MBY* readers until early spring (see p13). Either way, with an anticipated lifespan of ten years instead of one, Coppercoat should still work out cheaper than conventional antifouling in the long run.

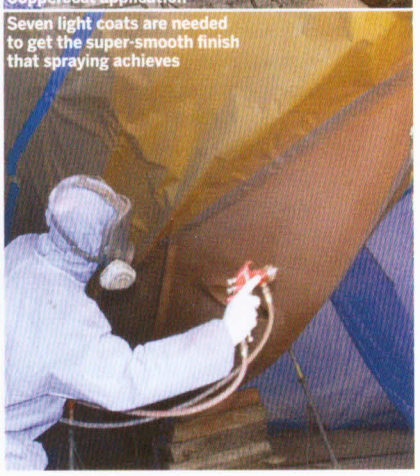
Sanding off the weeds

Autumn was fast approaching and Mark Tugwell of Arc Antifoul pointed out that Coppercoat can't be sprayed in wet and windy conditions. It looked like I might have to wait until next season to start the Coppercoat trial. Then it struck me – Port Solent Marina have a huge workshop and storage area for rent that can easily swallow a 43ft boat for reasons just like mine.

A quick visit to the marina office and two days later my hull was being restored to its former glory. The first step was to sand back the epoxy coating to leave a nicely keyed surface. On an antifouled boat all the old antifouling would also have to be stripped back first.

Lifted and pressure washed, Greg's Thunderhawk sets off for Port Solent's storage shed

The bare epoxy is sanded back in preparation for the Coppercoat application



Seven light coats are needed to get the super-smooth finish that spraying achieves

Once *Ruthless* was fully sanded, masked and tented, the spraying could begin. The plan was to spray on the Coppercoat in a series of fine coats to build up a super-smooth finish. Within a couple of days the fully trained sprayers had applied seven light coats. Once dry the finished hull was noticeably smoother to the touch than the bare epoxy coat, if not quite as smooth as polished gel-coat. The difference in texture between the sprayed areas and the small patches of hand-painted Coppercoat, where the supporting blocks had been, was also easy to feel.

Although dry to the touch it needed several more days to fully cure before it could be lightly sanded to expose the copper particles on the surface. This is an essential part of the Coppercoat process that needs doing once shortly before it's launched but it's not the time-consuming chore some think it to be. It took two men 30 minutes to lightly abrade the whole hull. Twenty minutes later *Ruthless* was back in the water, as smooth as a baby's bum.

Coppercoat out on the water

It was a sunny September day as we crept out of Portsmouth Harbour and eased the throttles forward. The difference over the heavily fouled hull was obvious but would it also prove quicker against the clock than a clean

Greg feels the difference between the low-drag Coppercoat and the rougher epoxy coating

It took two men 30 minutes to lightly abrade the finished surface and expose the copper granules

epoxied hull? The key measure of efficiency would be how fast the boat ran at exactly 3,200rpm, as this is the point at which my 8.1-litre petrol/lpg engines produce maximum torque. We set off west with the ebbing tide in our favour and recorded a whisker under 30 knots at exactly 3,200rpm. We turned around and ran back against the tide recording a two-way average speed of 28.2 knots. We then ran south then back on our bearing due north to double check this figure and got an average of 28.1 knots.

This is a clear 1-knot gain over the 27.1 knots I recorded with an epoxy-coated hull. As my rebuilt engines are still being run in, I didn't want to risk a full-bore run but I'd expect a bigger speed advantage at maximum revs. The same would hold true for most conventionally antifouled boats, which are likely to have a slightly rougher surface than my boat's epoxy coating.

So far so good then, but the real proof will be how well Coppercoat performs its antifouling duties. We won't get a proper idea of this until next season when the water warms up and the fouling is at its worst. In the meantime I could not resist carving a few fast turns through the Solent to celebrate having my Thunderhawk back in rude health. **Greg Copp**

Contact www.coppercoat.com
www.arccompany.co.uk

Greg's Sunseeker gained 1 extra knot thanks to the Coppercoat's low-drag finish but will it prove to be equally good at preventing fouling?

SEE THE VIDEO
mby.com/copp