

Dealer's Choice

Boat dealer Luke Brown Yachts refits a Nordic Tug on spec.

by Marilyn DeMartini

Andrew Cilla has an eye for boats with what he calls “good bones.” Always a die-hard boater and at one time the youngest broker at Fort Lauderdale-based Luke Brown Yachts, he bought the company in 1977 when he was 27. Today he employs 30 brokers and represents a few premier builders, including Nordic Tugs, based in Burlington, Washington. So he’s usually selling, not buying, and certainly not overseeing his own refit project.

Nordic Tugs hold a special appeal for Cilla, who admires their classic looks, quality fiberglass construction, stability, comfort, and pilothouse configuration. While Luke Brown Yachts sells new and used Nordic Tugs from 26’ to 54’ (7.9m to 16.5m), Cilla favors the design elements of the earlier models, which have teak interiors, and specifically the 44-footer (13.6m) with three saloon and pilothouse windows, instead of the single window of recent builds. He says he likes the aesthetics and enhanced structural integrity of the three-window wheelhouse.

When Jim Wilkey, brand manager of Luke Brown Yachts, found a 2004 Nordic Tug 44 (originally called the Nordic Tug 42) for sale in the Virgin Islands, Cilla jumped. Though cosmetically tired, the boat was structurally sound, and Cilla envisioned renovating it to better-than-new condition, believing that someone else would admire the boat as much as he did and pay for the excellent refit he had in mind. He



The Nordic Tug 44 (13.6m) restored by Luke Brown Yachts awaits a new owner.

assembled a team of enthusiasts including Wilkey as project manager, former yacht captain and Nordic Tug aficionado Rick Kellogg, and some of the area’s most reputable subcontractors for the refit of a boat they jokingly said “required a tetanus shot to work on.”

To complicate matters, Cilla wanted to make the restored boat available for kids and families he regularly takes on boat trips through the Freedom Waters Foundation, a Florida-based volunteer organization devoted to “enhancing the lives of individuals with special needs and veterans through providing

therapeutic boat experiences.” He thought the kids would get a kick out of water cannons, a pirate flag, and the revelry and release that goes along with having fun.

The Refit

The tug’s renovation at the Dania Beach Playboy Marine Center took eight months. The boat was stripped and rebuilt from the shell to the interior, and every component, including all interior stainless steel hardware, was either refurbished or replaced. An early challenge came when the flooring could

COURTESY LUKE BROWN YACHTS (ALL)



New windows, teak trim, vinyl sole, and countertops grace the galley and aft saloon.

not be properly faired, so the crew installed a flat ½"-marine-grade-plywood subfloor, and covered it with Amtico teak-and-holly vinyl-strip flooring for strength, durability, easy maintenance, and appearance. All other interior woodwork is vertical-grain teak to match the original cabinetry, an expensive but important choice for the sake of consistency.

The boat needed to be repowered, and its electrical system upgraded. Cilla's chosen solutions were a warranted remanufactured 6CTA 8.3-liter 430-hp Cummins diesel and a new

Northern Lights 12-kW generator. The crew relocated the battery banks farther aft to improve vessel trim and access to the machinery.

The upgraded propulsion system was optimized for the tug's stable full-keel, hard-chine, flared, semi-displacement hull. According to Cilla, the new Bennett trim tabs and a four-blade prop get the boat up to her increased cruising speed of 15 knots more quickly.

When adding two new air-conditioning units—a total of three service the pilothouse, saloon, and staterooms—

the team installed larger raw-water intakes to relieve pressure on the pumps. They replaced all through-hull fittings, and the new blackwater pipes have double-walled sanitation lines to prevent odor permeation. After strategic alterations to layout and orientation were made to ease access and maintenance, each operational component was reinstalled. A new icemaker went in along with a new washer/dryer revented outside to port of the pilothouse, rather than into the engine-room. Lighting there was increased from Nordic Tugs' typical two halogen fixtures to a full LED array. "You need sunglasses in the engine room now," laughs Kellogg. "We wanted to make everything simple. Any novice could work on this boat."

Some new technologies added to the engine room and onboard systems include Sundown insulation to reduce onboard engine noise, and new automatic charging relays (ACRs) and in-line fuses to bring the electrical bonding system up to date. An additional freshwater pump was plumbed into the system to provide redundancy for the 200 gal (757 l) of fresh water. Both



Left—The reconfigured engine room houses a remanufactured 6CTA 8.3-liter 430-hp Cummins diesel. **Right**—The battery bank was relocated farther aft and connected to an upgraded charging system. Note the new sound insulation lining the engine room.



In the businesslike pilothouse of the Nordic Tug, Luke Brown Yachts had the windows resealed, and new lighting, wood trim, and upholstery was installed throughout.

320-gal (1,211.3-l) fuel tanks were refurbished by steam-cleaning and pressurizing to prevent any costly failure.

The original topside gelcoat was prepped, faired, and sprayed with

Awlcraft acrylic urethane topcoat. As an experienced owner of several Nordic Tugs, Cilla said the Awlcraft finish is especially advantageous on the superstructure around windows, door-

frames, and tracks originally powder-coated by the manufacturer. While powder-coating is effective on raw metal, it is difficult to patch or touch up. The harder, more durable Awlcraft finish can be repaired if needed. Below the waterline the hull is sealed with two coats of Interlux InterProtect 2000E barrier coat and two coats of Pettit Trinidad Pro antifouling bottom paint.

Revarnished handcrafted teak and new teak components enhance the interior's classic-yacht look. In the galley, new appliances and Corian countertops were added; crockery can be stowed in new custom vertical-grain teak overhead cabinets; and to

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save space, a handmade teak-framed bamboo cutting board was fitted over the range, and trash disappears in a hide-away teak bin. In the main saloon a teak foldout table complements the new entertainment system with flat-panel TV. The metal-framed windows were rebbed and their frames covered with teak trim to match the cabinetry and other teak elements. In the raised pilothouse, windows were also resealed and teak-trimmed. Teak frames the overhead LED light fixtures and the new cream leather ceiling liner.

The nav station, tucked to starboard beneath the pilothouse, doubles as an office with a Blue Sea Systems electrical panel for the boat's lower-gauge DC rewiring and USB charging stations. The spacious forward master stateroom has 7'4" (2.2m) headroom, teak cabinetry, and a head and shower en suite. Cream leather paneling enhances the teak for an interior unlike

other Nordic Tugs. New portholes and hatches throughout ensure a dry ride.

Cilla serves as the president of the nonprofit Freedom Waters Foundation, and has been using the remanufactured Nordic Tug 44, relaunched in August of 2018, to enhance the lives of veterans and other individuals with special needs. But it's time to turn that page, which is why Cilla is looking for a buyer who shares his vision. Asking \$695,000, the dealer believes this retrofit is a superior and "proper yacht," which by his estimate would cost more than a million to build new to the same standard. It's a calculation and choice that drive a lot of used boat sales and refit projects in the current market. **PBB**

About the Author: Marilyn DeMartini entered the marine trades representing World Championship offshore racing teams such as *Drambuie On Ice*, *Lucas*

Oil, and *Outerlimits* powerboats. She managed PR for Latham Marine and the Cigarette Racing Team for more than a decade. She has written for marine publications including *Yachts International*, *Power Motor Yacht*, *Soundings*, and *Boat International*.

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