



The 78' (23.7m) 14-ton Spirit of St. Kitts under way with a reefed main. Her hulls remain sound even after repairs brought about by extensive hurricane damage.

was launched in '85, the manager of the development bank on St. Kitts approached him about setting up a full-time boatbuilding business in Basseterre. Brookes put up some money; the bank financed a building shed and tools with which to start Brookes Boats. (That shop now operates under the name Indigo Yachts, and is managed by David Risdale-Saw.)

Starting in 1987 Brookes's company built a series of sailing and power cats. One of the first was the 78' (21.3m), 14-ton Spirit of St. Kitts, still sailing out of Basseterre.

In a departure from his steady diet of catamarans, Brookes built an Ian Howlett-designed International Six-Meter for Walwyn, who had captured the 1988 European championship for the class, sailing a sistership. Brookes remembered the build because it had

to meet the standards of a Lloyd's representative measuring it for adherence to the International Six-Meter rule, and because it was strip-planked. Whereas the Lloyd's rep basically confirmed that Brookes's crew could build to high standards, the planking method became a game-changer. Strip-planking made for a heavier but stronger hull, enabling Brookes to do away with the bulkheads-and-stringers arrangement he'd

inherited from Spronk. "When I saw that [strip-plank construction], I never looked back," he said.

The next big build was the Peter Wormwood-designed, Brookes-engineered Indigo, a 67' (20.4m) racing/cruising catamaran, strip-planked in Western red cedar. She was expensive, with a high-roach main, complex mechanical and electrical systems, and titanium hardware. But after successful racing and a circumnavigation, she returned home and, like other Brookes cats, went to work. Now she's chartering out of Grenada.

One of the several strip-

planked charter cats to follow Indigo was Spirit of Malta, a 65' (14.8m) day-charter boat that's still working the Mediterranean island nation. Built as a variation on Indigo's molds, Spirit of Malta also incorporated the wing-mast technology that Brookes gleaned from designer Roger Hatfield of Gold Coast Yachts. Two halves of the spar are laid up from thin strip planks and glassed together around a 1/4"-thick (6.3mm) shear web into a foil-sectioned, feathering mast. Besides performing more efficiently, these wing masts, said Brookes, are cheaper to build than equivalent aluminum spars. Nevertheless, from his transatlantic delivery of Spirit of Malta, Brookes recalled a drawback of the design: In 50 knots of wind, the wing mast itself was almost too much sail area—nearly 200 sq ft (18.5m²).

Other cats, including Spirit of Barbados, Assegal, and Swaltga, followed with slight variations. By the time Brookes sold the boatshop, in 1998, he'd built a half-dozen big sailing cats, plus a handful of powercats and monohulls as dive and excursion boats.



Top right—With slight adjustments, these molds have been the basis for most of Brookes's cats built in the last 20 years. **Right**—For a number of his larger cats, Brookes built wing masts inspired by an early design by the Gougeon Brothers' shop and subsequently refined by Gold Coast Yachts. The mast is intended to improve a big cat's behavior, which typically suffers from poor headsail performance due to load-path geometry. After building 80 such spars, Gold Coast has found that Douglas-fir is second only to carbon fiber for lightweight construction.

Gold Coast Yachts Wing Mast

