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## Nauteek SC200: a very clever bit of kit

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Marine electronics continue to get more affordable and ever more sophisticated. The GPS-based Nauteek SC200 costs £400, less than the price of a standalone GPS receiver not very long ago. And it does much, much more.

Better still, it doesn't need any wiring in. The small square box, its front mostly taken up by the large, clear, monochrome LCD display, also includes aerial and rechargeable Lithium ion battery.

Aimed perhaps primarily at the sports boat market, this clever little instrument provides a remarkable tactical package for racing sailors. There is a simpler version, the SC100, which costs £100 less, which would also be ideal for cruising yachtsmen who don't want the hassle of wiring in instruments or drilling holes in their boat!

The biggest selling point of the Nauteeq SC200 (apart from its highly competitive price) is its astonishing simplicity. "Intuitive" is often a wild exaggeration where software is concerned. But with clear scrolling menus and just six buttons to press (alone or sometimes in combination) we quickly got this running, straight out of the box.

And as a "real world" test we set it up using the simple "quick start guide," without bothering to read the manual first, as we are fairly sure this is what most purchasers will do. And we set it up on the way out to the race course, with the deadline of the start gun looming.

And it all worked! We set up the race timer, entered both ends of the start line, and also True Upwind Direction (TUD) and tacking angle. It was all more or less self explanatory.

The package is obviously aimed at short windward/leeward courses, rather than "round the cans" where the wind can vary round the course, but even so it's a very clever piece of kit.

There's a lot of processing power in there, as well as some well-thought-out software, that gives you all the information you need. (No surprise to learn that its French creators are keen racers themselves, and designed it to suit their own needs). And if you are sailing windward/leeward courses, the race screen will switch itself from upwind to downwind legs, without help from the crew.

From our point of view, sailing round the cans, it was a definite drawback that there was only capability for one waypoint. But this is to be rectified in a firmware update before next season. And one of the brilliant things about the SC200 is that existing sets can be updated with free downloads.

Another great feature is the ability to customise the display, if you don't want to use the standard race cressn. You can use it to show just speed (over the ground, as all its calculations come from GPS) or compass (course over the ground – you can correct it with local variation). Both can be damped as desired. You can use it to show the race timer, a tactical compass based on calculation of COG, tacking angle (user defined) and TUD, or VMG, or VTD (velocity to waypoint) or any number of combinations, graphical as well as numerical.

We settled for two lines of data, SOG and COG once we'd stopped using the countdown timer and distance to start line. The figures were still large and clear enough to read, even through rain and spray spotted sunglasses.

The SC200 is easy to fit, too. There are three brackets available, for bulkhead, mast or horizontal pole mounting. The mast bracket (£40 extra) is simply fixed with a Velcro strap. And the unit fits to the bracket with powerful Velcro strips. There's a short safety line to tie it on as well, just in case the Velcro fails, but it proved secure enough.

(Just in case you do drop it overboard, the makers say the SC200 is fully waterproof and it floats, but we didn't put this to the test!)

Anyway, it's a simple matter to take the unit off the boat at the end of racing. This is not only useful for theft prevention, but it also enables one of the really exciting "extras" – you can take it home, connect it to your computer via a supplied USB lead, and download your track for viewing and analysis, either with Google Earth or a programme called GPS Action Replay. Highly instructive!

The SC200 comes complete with a neoprene carry pouch and charging cable – claimed battery life is 30 hours – and integrated flash memory provides 14 hours of recording at 1 second intervals. The recording capacity can be increased by increasing the interval.

I wish we'd had it to look back at some of the offshore races we did this summer!

The makers say this of the SC200: "Training aid, racing aid, tactical tool – you will be able to take it use it as you wish and bring it with you on any boat you sail on..."

I was hugely impressed by the SC200, and found it extremely useful, even though I didn't feel I'd done more than scratch the surface of its capabilities, before having to hand the test model back.

My only quibble is aesthetic: I felt the red plastic case looked cheap and gimmicky. Such a sophisticated piece of kit deserves something a bit classier.

### Verdict

All in all, Nauteek's SC 200 tactical GPS is a remarkable tool which represents excellent value for money. The ability to move it from boat to boat is a real bonus.

### Vital statistics:

- Dimensions: 110 x 85 x 35 mm
- Weight: 210 g
- Digit size: 15, 20, 25 or 40mm
- Backlit illumination
- Battery life: 30h
- Price: £399

For more information visit [www.exaquac.co.uk](http://www.exaquac.co.uk)

