
Pros

- + Very easy-to-read dial
- + Good craftsmanship
- + Attractive design

Cons

- Date display changes slowly
- Water-resistant to only 60 m



BRINE TIME

Can IWC's new sailing watch, the Portuguese Yacht Club Chronograph, survive the perfect storm of a WatchTime test?



BY JENS KOCH

PHOTOS BY OK-PHOTOGRAPHY

In 1967, IWC launched a watch that would become one of the brand's biggest success stories: a sporty, three-handed automatic called the Yacht Club. Though little remembered today, the Yacht Club was IWC's most popular model of the late 1960s and 1970s.

A year ago, IWC resurrected the Yacht Club in a new chronograph version and incorporated it into its Portuguese collection. Like other Portuguese models, the new Yacht Club has a big case (45.5 millimeters), Arabic numerals and a railroad-track-style minutes ring. Unlike other Portuguese watches, it has a gaggle of sailing-themed features: push-pieces shaped like bollards, a seafaring red-and-white color scheme and luminous hands and markers that can be read even in a thick, offshore fog. It immediately became the sportiest Portuguese model.

The case deserves much praise for its fine craftsmanship; its unusual bezel, which widens in a smooth slope from bottom to top; and its beautifully contrasting, polished and satin-finished surfaces.

The dial is very large, more than 40 millimeters wide, and is quite attractive and easy to read. Because it is black, it provides a high-contrast background for the silver-colored hour and minute hands. For greater legibility in the dark, 12 o'clock is marked with double markers. The only fly in the ointment, a tiny one, is the date display, which sits in an awkward position abutting the numeral "3." Furthermore, it switches from one day to the next very sluggishly, beginning the shift an hour before midnight.

SPECS

IWC PORTUGUESE YACHT CLUB CHRONOGRAPH

Manufacturer: IWC Schaffhausen, Baumgartenstrasse 15, CH-8201 Schaffhausen, Switzerland

Reference number: IW390204

Functions: Hours, minutes, seconds, date, flyback chronograph, 60-minute and 12-hour counters

Movement: Caliber 89360, 28,800 vph; 40 jewels; Incabloc shock absorption; Glucydur balance; fine adjustment via screws on the balance; diameter = 30 mm, height = 7.5 mm, 68-hour power reserve

Case: Stainless steel, curved sapphire crystal is nonreflective on both sides, fully threaded back with sapphire window, screw-down crown, water-resistant to 60 meters

Strap and clasp: Rubber strap, stainless-steel folding clasp

Rate results:

(Deviations in seconds per 24 hours, without/with chronograph switched on)

Dial up	+2	+2
Dial down	-2	0
Crown up	-2	-2
Crown down	-1	+1
Crown left	0	0
Crown right	-2	-2
Greatest deviation of rate:	4	4
Average deviation:	-0.8	-0.3
Mean amplitude:		
Flat positions	282°	247°
Hanging positions	248°	210°

Dimensions: Diameter = 45.4 mm, height = 14.5 mm, weight = 137 grams

Variations: With silver-white dial; in rose gold (\$23,100)

Price: \$12,600

*The Yacht Club's beautiful
folding clasp bears IWC's
"Probus Scafusia" seal.*





The flexible rotor bridge, which absorbs shocks, is visible through the caseback.

The Yacht Club is the first Portuguese model to be fitted with Caliber 89360, which IWC developed in-house and launched in 2007. This caliber offers one very appealing benefit: its elapsed-hours and elapsed-minutes counters are combined in a single subdial in the upper half of the dial. They can be read easily at a glance, as if you're reading the time in a second time zone. This feature is especially helpful in measuring long periods of time.

IWC's engineers developed a new, double-ratchet winding system for this caliber. Like the winding system used in some other IWC watches, it was inspired by the device that Albert Pellaton, IWC's former technical director, invented in the 1940s. Unlike that system, though, the one in Caliber 89360 has two double clicks rather than one, so twice as many ratchets pull and push to tighten the mainspring. And they're no longer controlled by a cam plate, but — as in an automobile engine — by a crankshaft. The ratchets are arranged so that they wind the mainspring even when the rotor moves only slightly. The winding mechanism is 30 percent more efficient than its forerunner,

SCORES

IWC PORTUGUESE YACHT CLUB CHRONOGRAPH

Strap and clasp (max. 10 points): Rubber strap with cleanly crafted, secure, easy-to-operate, beautifully designed folding clasp **8**

Operation (5): Easy-to-grasp crown; a stop-seconds function and rapid reset for the date display; somewhat stiff push-pieces **4**

Case (10): Good craftsmanship, appealing juxtaposition of satin-finished and polished surfaces, an attractively curved crown protector; the water-resistance level could be higher. **8**

Design (15): The maritime design incorporates many elements of the attractive and elegant Portuguese collection. **14**

Legibility (5): The time can be read at a glance thanks to luminous, high-contrast hands and a very large dial; the chronograph's elapsed-time counters are also easy to read. **4**

Wearing comfort (10): Despite its large size, this watch fits surprisingly well, due largely to its flexible strap, which curves downward at the lugs. **8**

Movement (20): Complex construction with flyback function, shudder-free fine adjustment, and shock-absorbent rotor bridge, but the decoration is no more than standard for this class of watch. **18**

Rate results (10): The amplitude was too low when the chronograph was switched on, but except for this peccadillo, the rate results were good and the average deviation was very nearly zero seconds. **8**

Overall value (15): The price is high, but the watch offers a better cost-benefit ratio than some other IWC models. **11**

TOTAL: 83 POINTS

enabling its designers to make the rotor lighter, thereby reducing wear and tear on the movement. Caliber 89360's power reserve is three days.

Another special detail is the flexible rotor bridge, which absorbs shocks. The movement has a screwed balance for fine adjustment, a sign of high quality. Arguably the brightest highlight of this caliber is the elegant column wheel that controls the chronograph's functions. The elapsed-minutes counter is designed so that rather than jumping to the next full minute, it moves continuously.

The watch has a flyback function: with a single push of the push-piece, you can make the chrono hands return to zero and instantly start timing another interval.

For the chronograph's coupling, IWC uses an oscillating pinion similar to the one in the ETA 7750. This device was developed to simplify chronographs, but has proven to be a genuine improvement, not merely a simplification. IWC equips the chronograph center wheel with 240 teeth, which have a special profile to minimize the jump that occurs when the elapsed-seconds hand begins to move.

The movement also has a stop-seconds function and a quick-adjustment system for the date. These features, combined with the large, easy-to-grip crown, make the watch quite easy to set. The push-pieces are rather stiff, but this is to be expected with a column-wheel chronograph.

The neatly crafted decorations include pretty engraved patterns, polished screw heads, and a circular-grained base plate. Much of the movement is visible, thanks to the skeletonized rotor. Alas, the edges of the plates are neither beveled nor polished, and the levers, made of polished sheet metal, aren't quite as handsome as they would be if they had been milled.

The rate results were quite impressive. The watch we tested lost only one second per day on the wrist. The timing-machine results were similar: the average deviation for all positions was just -0.8 seconds with the chronograph switched off and -0.3 seconds with it on. In either mode, the greatest deviation among the various positions was four seconds. The balance's amplitude declined significantly only once: when the chronograph was running and the watch was held in a hanging position, it fell to a weak 210 degrees.

The Yacht Club is one of the few very big watches that can be worn comfortably by someone with an average-sized wrist. The end of its rubber strap will reach almost all the way around to the opposite lug, but the watch nonetheless fits snugly. The texture of the inside of the strap helps minimize sweating. The outer surface of the strap boasts attractive, fabric-like embossing. The fact that the strap is made of rubber, not leather, does not detract from the watch's high-quality appearance. The clasp is well-crafted and sturdy. It folds closed securely and opens easily. Like the case, it boasts a combination of satin-finished and polished surfaces.

One of the few complaints we have about the watch is with its relatively low level of water-resistance, just 60 meters, which is not enough for serious water sports. The original Yacht Club was water-resistant to 100 meters.

With a retail price of \$12,600, this chronograph is priced higher than some of its competitors. Then again, the Portuguese Automatic, at \$10,900, doesn't cost much less. The Yacht Club Chronograph's cost-benefit ratio is better than that of some other IWC models. The watch's sportily elegant styling, admirable rate results, high level of craftsmanship and ease of use combine to make it a welcome passenger on any voyage. ○



Variations of the Yacht Club with silver-white dial and with rose-gold case