

BOAT TEST

Head of the Class

Grady-White's Freedom 375 fishes in high style. | BY GLENN LAW |

Grady-White's new flagship, the Freedom 375 leads the dual-console outboard category in size. Bigger and beamier than the Freedom 335, it is built on the same C. Raymond Hunt-designed SeaV² hull as the popular and proven Canyon 366. Billed as a multifunction boat, the 375 adds a large measure of comfort and convenience features — both family and entertainment oriented — to create a varied-purpose fishing boat.

I joined Grady-White vice presidents Joey Weller and David Neese in North Carolina to sea-trial Hull No. 1, equipped with triple Yamaha 300s and, in lieu of the standard bow thruster, Yamaha's Helm Master control system, which we spent an after-

CONDITIONS



- LOCATION: Morehead City, North Carolina
- WIND: NW, 12 knots
- SEA STATE: Three- to five-foot mixed chop
- TEST LOAD: Fuel, three adults and fishing gear

noon running through its paces. A 5-knot current and crowded dockage in Bogue Sound offered ideal testing for the joystick control and the big 13-foot-2-inch-beam hull. With the ability to move the boat in any direction, and even slide sideways into a tight parallel parking slot at the dock with precision, this control system is destined to do to hard-earned dual- and triple-outboard handling skills what GPS did to dead-reckoning navigation.

First impressions of the Freedom 375 are of spaciousness and comfort.

Weller and Neese talked about redefining the classification, from a "twin console" to "twin cabin." Given the size of the twin step-down cabins, the renaming seems appropriate. The port cabin holds a settee/bunk, an aft quarter-berth or rod-storage area, TV, cedar-lined hanging locker, and a screened porthole that opens to the passway. The starboard head cabin has a curtained shower/head area, vanity, microwave, and electrical panel on the aft bulkhead. Both cabins have overhead for 6-plus-footers to stand up straight.



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SPECIFICATIONS

Grady-White Freedom 375

LOA: 36'7" Beam: 13'2" Draft: 29" Deadrise: 20 degrees

Fuel: 320 gal. Water: 54 gal. Max hp: 1,050

Weight: 18,111 lb. Base price: \$639,630 with triple Yamaha 300s and Helm Master

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Through a foldaway windshield panel and a half-door, there's roomy bow seating around a table split into half-moon segments, which provides clear passage to the waist-level locker up front that holds a windlass, rode and anchor bracket.

The windshield — reaching from the top of the cabins to the fiberglass hardtop — offered protection that fooled us into

thinking spring had come. Side glass runs halfway to the top, with Clear2Sea panels opening above. An optional rear curtain is available, so the air conditioner and heater can temper the enclosed helm and passenger space.

The dash holds two 12-inch MFDs with room to spare, and a double row of rocker switches lies above at shoulder level, to easily manage accessories while running. The L-shaped seating to port includes a foldaway table with storage beneath.

■ PERFORMANCE		
RPM	MPH	GPH
3,500	24.5	25.2
4,000	31.1	32.7
4,500	37.0	43.1
5,500	45.6	65.9
5,900	48.7	78.2

With triple Yamaha 300s

Overhead in the standard hardtop, a sunroof with retractable glass shuts with a sliding panel, or it can open to the air. Forward to port is a drop-down panel for an optional flat-screen TV. Also overhead, an inset holds a dozen life jackets behind zippered mesh — out of the way but close at hand. Aft of that is inset rack space for four trolling rods.

A hatch in the floor opens to a huge storage bin for buckets, bumpers and lines. At the back edge of the top, a Sureshade electric retractable awning deploys to shade the entire cockpit.

The cockpit offers a rear-facing seat for watching baits, with a slide-out extension. Behind the helm seat, a cockpit galley holds a sink and an electric grill, with drawers and a refrigerator

in the base. The counter and sink become a convenient bait-rigging station. The fold-down bench seat sits along the transom.

An access port in the bilge hatch over the pumps and 8 kW generator puts seacock extension rods in easy reach. A transom door leads to the engines and swim platform. Fresh- and raw-water bibs sit in the under-gunwale rod storage. In the covering board above is a pull-out shower hose with a hot and cold mixer.

A break in the weather let us run out the inlet the next morning, but the inlet turned out to be the only calm water. Coming on plane, the 375 stayed level, with no bow rise to interrupt sight lines. Throttling down, it never squats as it comes off, just settles down.

Passing Lookout Shoals, we hit disorganized three- to four-foot seas, with some fives thrown in. The 375 ate them up, riding level and smooth, and coming off the occasional five-footer to land softly, with the Carolina bow flare decisively



throwing spray down and back.

The Yamaha 300s pushed us along at a comfortable cruise just under 30 mph while turning 3,800 rpm and burning 30 gph. Pushed on up to 5,900 rpm, we hit just over 47 mph, burning 78.2 gph.

Testament to the ride, at 35 mph, Neese grilled up some breakfast brats in the cockpit, and never lost a dog or his balance.

So many features on the 375 are standard that it's easier to list the options. A couple of nice ones on our test boats included the freezer/fish box in the transom that eliminates the need for ice, a 35-gallon livewell, and a starboard side door that makes for a level entrance at the dock.

While the Freedom 375 is expressly designed to serve a range of fishing, family and entertainment functions, it was agreed: Though the weather had been more amenable to boat testing than fishing, trolling baits at the Big Rock left us feeling like we were truly aboard a fishing boat; and we couldn't ask for a more comfortable day offshore. ~