

BY RANDY VANCE

GRADY-WHITE FREEDOM 325 DC

Luxury and Durability Meet Fishability



A

Kenny Chesney song describes boats as “vessels of freedom.” Grady-White took that to heart and continues to expand its Freedom series of dual console fish boats, offering a ton of family fun as well.

The latest, the 325 DC, is another example of why the company has won the National Marine Manufacturers Association Customer Satisfaction Index Award every year since it was instituted in 2001. That track record had me jonesing to turn a critical eye on my test boat in late January, as

Grady-White's new 325 marks the 10th Freedom model in the company's popular dual console lineup, which is capped by the 375.

I blended some freedom on the water with a very serious period of fishing and product evaluation on Florida's Gulf Coast.

Could a boat this beautiful fish?

LOVELY LINES

The Freedom 325 is definitely beautiful, with its upturned bow designed to ease it through

the treacherous passes of the Carolinas. The bow lines sweep back and down in a graceful curve to the secure cockpit, without interrupting the boat's fishability. The 325's slender profile is lengthened by the transom platform surrounding the deep motor well.

The platform is deep enough to give owners easy access to both motors, so the cowl can be lifted to check the oil and filters beneath. A

RANDY VANCE / SPORT FISHING (OPPOSITE TOP), COURTESY GRADY-WHITE (2)

ladder on the starboard side nests there and can be deployed from the water, a saving grace for a man overboard.

The vessel's hardtop boasts integrated supports that keep it sleek, and a grab rail runs from the dash to the top, providing a secure grip for extra stability in rough waters. An overhead hatch makes raising or lowering the masthead light simpler. Polished, chrome-plated stainless and powder-coated aluminum supports give it flash and elegance.

Grady boats are known for their safety, as well as for other reasons such as solid, all-composite structural component construction. But construction and flotation keep a boat afloat in unlikely emergencies; there's more to a hull's safety than that. A smooth, predictable ride counts too.

CONFIDENT STABILITY

On my Fish Trial day, with temperatures in the 40s, the seas had climbed to about 5 feet. For owners of smaller boats, seas that size automatically mean alternate plans like golf. But the 325's 33-foot length and 10-foot-9-inch beam promised not only safety in rough water but comfort, just one more chalk mark in support of boating freedom.

Our crew of four boarded the 325 in Clearwater Beach, on Florida's Gulf Coast. As we powered up to leave the inlet, I was pleasantly surprised by the smooth ride that diminished the wind-driven surf and made rigging lines and baits on the way out practical. Grady-White never misses an opportunity to promote its SeaV2 hull, and I've actually never felt that the company has overstated its benefits. On test day,



Grady never forgets fishermen: The 325 comes with a portside transom 32-gallon livewell (above), and loads of storage for rods. By its dual console design, it also features a wide-open cockpit.

horizon. At 30, the 325 offers a cruising range of 400 miles.

FISHING SETUP

To fulfill the fishing portion of my trial, our crew had set out pinfish traps in the bay the night before. We approached the traps to port so we could pull them easily through the side door. A stowable ladder can be deployed at deck level, but without it, we had a clean surface to kneel on and draw aboard the traps.

The captain snapped the livewell switch, and swirling water quickly rose to the top of the 32-gallon tank. Even better, Grady-White's proprietary water-inflow manifold enveloped our bait top to bottom with fresh, aerated seawater.

We planned to bottomfish a shallow reef just a few miles offshore. While the 325 easily could have carried us 40 more miles to deeper seas, the day's cold temperatures weren't that inviting. We used the standard windlass to anchor us bow to wind and stayed tucked behind the dual console's wraparound windscreen.

Despite the rough seas, we had no trouble keeping our footing while

that confident ride proved that point.

The variable-deadrise hull progresses from 20 degrees at the transom to about 30 degrees amidships, and on to a sharp, wave-cleaving stem at the bow. The 325 DC remained steady in these seas at 30 mph and reassuringly stable at rest.

In calmer water, the vessel powered up to 30 mph in just 7 seconds with aggressive throttling. Leaning against the helm seat, I never lost sight of the

PERFORMANCE

POWER Twin Yamaha F300s
LOAD Four crew, 140 gal. fuel, 20 gal. water
TOP SPEED 48.8 mph @ 5,900 rpm
TIME TO 30 MPH 7 sec.
BEST MPG 1.8 mpg @ 36.2 mph (4,000 rpm)

GRADY-WHITE BOATS

Greenville, NC
 252-752-2111
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HULL

LOA 33 ft. 1 in.
BEAM 10 ft. 9 in.
DEADRISE 20 deg.
DRY WEIGHT 9,300 lb. (w/o engines)
DRAFT 2 ft.
FUEL 288 gal.
MAX POWER 700 hp

bracing against the coaming pads. When the vessel swung on the hook abeam of the seas, we rocked a little more — as expected — but the SeaV2 hull and the boat's wide beam kept us from losing our balance.

When a cold front passes through, practically nothing bites. We caught small porgies, squirrelfish, some small seabass and lizardfish — all released.

The 325 provided plenty of rod holders for this particular project, with a pair in each gunwale and a rocket launcher on the hardtop. However, for other types of fishing, anglers might benefit from shotgun rod holders at the transom and another gunwale holder on each side. For offshore trolling, outriggers easily mount to the hardtop.

Horizontal rod hangers under the gunwales helped stow some rods in standby, and the bulkhead in the head compartment opened to a storage area beneath the portside bow lounge. The extended compartment included butt and tip hangers to keep more rods secure.

MULTIUSE AMENITIES

For cruising to the grounds, the 325 features two seats that slide out of the mezzanine at the touch of an electric button. Pop out the transom seat for two more cushy riding spots.



If we'd needed to gaff a fish, sturdy toe rails offered secure footing. A tackle-storage bin in the transom kept a couple of utility boxes handy, and more could stow in compartments under the helm seats.

Freedom comes from the dual console's bow seating area, accessible via the walkway between the helm and passenger side consoles. A wind dam meets the windshield to enclose the cockpit from cold breezes, but for warm days, spacious seating lies ahead of the windshield. Arm rests, deep cushions and comfortable bolsters make bow riding pleasant at speed. Fill the area with a center cushion for a sun deck or raise the center support for a cocktail table.

Below: The cockpit is rimmed with coaming pads that cushion an angler's legs. Below right: A roomy head compartment lies beneath the port passenger console. The starboard console offers a double berth.

The 325 DC provides plenty of room forward for relaxing or for rigging tackle. Lower the table and add a center cushion to create a sun deck.

For all-day comfort and privacy, a large head compartment resides to port, under the passenger console. A cleverly designed cabin under the starboard console can convert from a settee to a double berth large enough for 6-foot-plus lounge lizards — another hashmark on the plus side of freedom.

I found it hard to ignore the smooth-operating Yamaha propulsion on board, complete with Yamaha's LCD digital boat display. I certainly appreciated the twin 300 hp outboards for cruising, but the engines also provide a powerful punch to launch a tuber or wakeboarder. In fact, the 325 has an optional retractable tow pylon.

Grady-White adds extension handles to seacocks so anglers can open them without lying down on their bellies. The handles reach to just below the spacious hatch over the bilge access to pumps, plumbing and fuel filters. To make it even easier, Grady's Captain Grady iPad app explains everything on board, often with videos.

Grady factory-rigs the Fusion stereo system but leaves the enormous dashboard a blank canvas for your choice of dual navigation screens and VHF radio. I loved the double helm seat with split bolsters, leaving captain and passenger the choice to stand or sit.

Grady's track record for award-winning customer service, easy operation, and durable design and construction enable the 325 to deliver a laid-back boating experience and the freedom to choose whether to fish, cruise, dive or raise a zillion giggles from tubing kids. ☺

