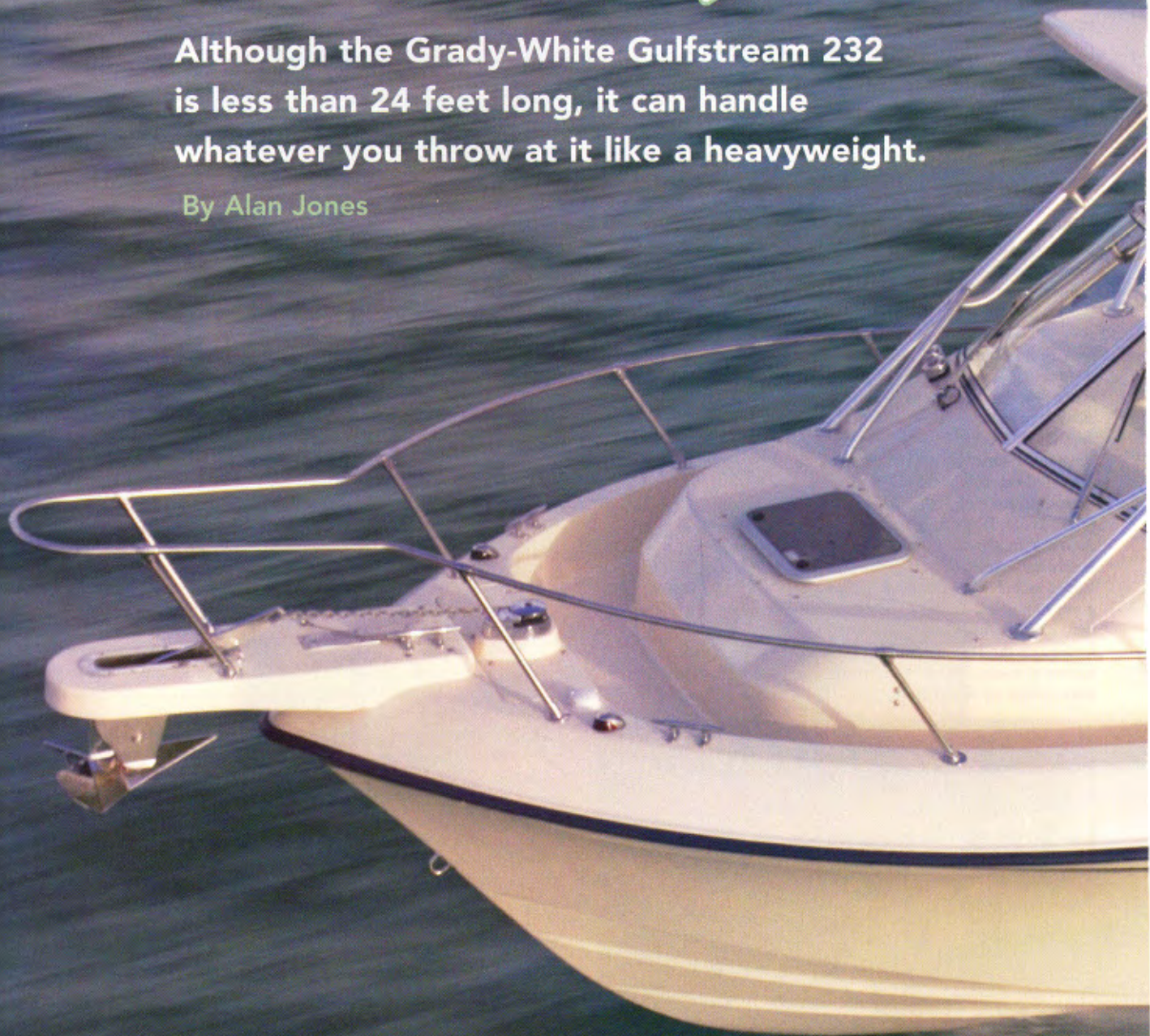


# Banks

# *Brawler*

Although the Grady-White Gulfstream 232 is less than 24 feet long, it can handle whatever you throw at it like a heavyweight.

By Alan Jones



SEPTEMBER 2006 BOATING WORLD BOAT OF THE MONTH





**A**fter an hour of fighting the yet-unseen fish on 30-pound test line, at least one of you is tired. All you want is one good fight to illustrate the fishability of Grady-White's Gulfstream 232 and man, have you ever been granted your wish. But right now, your adversary is in the process of taking its third lap around the boat, so you make the circumnavigation of the walkaround one more time.



## GRADY-WHITE GULFSTREAM 232



LOA 23'5"  
Beam 9'3"  
Weight 4,605 lbs.  
Fuel 150 gal.  
Base Price \$99,890  
(w/twin 150-hp Yamaha 4-strokes)  
Price As Tested \$115,920  
(w/twin 150-hp Yamaha 4-strokes)  
Hull Warranty 5-year transferable  
NMMA Certified? Yes

Grady-White Boats  
P.O. Box 1527  
Greenville, NC 27835  
(252) 752-2111  
[www.gradywhite.com](http://www.gradywhite.com)

### Test Data

Performance data was gathered with twin 150-hp Yamaha 4-strokes, four people on board and 135 gallons of fuel.

Top Speed 45 mph  
Time To Plane 5.1 seconds  
0-30 mph 9.2 seconds  
Decibels @ Idle 58 dB-A  
Decibels @ 30 mph 84 dB-A  
Decibels @ WOT 92 dB-A

### Standard Features

Automatic bilge pumps, stainless-steel hardware, 4 cockpit drains, galley sink, insulated ice box w/OB drain, lockable hatch w/screen, cabin rod storage, butane stove, 12V outlet, cockpit shower, compass, 9 drink holders, 265-quart starboard fish box, 297-quart aft fish box, hydraulic trim tabs, 36-gallon livewell, deluxe helm and companion chairs, fold-away stern seat, hydraulic steering, raw-water washdown and 12-gallon freshwater tank.

### Options

Windlass, bow pulpit, cockpit bolsters, hard-top w/radio box, storage net, spreader lights, outriggers, deluxe helm chair II, Sirius satellite radio system, CD stereo system, full-width swim platform, windshield washer and canvas options.

While most 23-foot cuddy cabin boats have a walkway around the cabin, actually using them requires a maneuver that most closely resembles a Flying Wallendas high-wire act. Try that with a fish on the line and you have a "pre-man overboard" scenario, but the Gulfstream, with its wide foot path and excellent handholds, makes it easy enough to accomplish, although this time around you have an added degree of difficulty, because the fish is ducking beneath the anchor rope, so this turns into a tag-team event with now co-fisherman Joey Weller, marketing manager at Grady-White ... so much for an IGFA record. Weller gladly hands the rod right back to the angler, who's starting to resemble a battered Sylvester Stallone in round 15 of the first "Rocky" movie ("Cut me Mick, cut me"). The standing joke is, "I think it's coming up, here's the sinker, whoops, there goes the sinker." The crew just wants a look at what's on the wet end of the line, because although they're fishing for cobia, it could be anything here on the southern Outer Banks of North Carolina near Morehead City.

You start to wonder if this area has *any* calm days, since on your fourth fishing trip here the wind is howling — just like you've come to expect. But it's a great place to test Grady-Whites, which are built a couple of hours away in Greenville, North Carolina. Evidence of violent winds past is revealed by the condo where you normally stay, that's wrapped in plastic like your grandma's sofa — because its stucco outer surface became "un-stucco."

The first part of the run is in relatively protected waters, but where the Intracoastal meets the Atlantic Ocean it gets pretty ugly, thanks to the

25-mph-plus wind whistling from offshore. Keeping the trim down on the twin Yamaha F150 4-strokes allows you to use the SeaV2 hull's sharper leading edge, which measures 56 degrees and steadily moderates to 30 degrees amidships, to carve through the slop with ease as you settle into a moderate cruise speed. At the transom, the variable deadrise hull flattens to 20 degrees, which gives you the perfect blend of stability and rough-water performance. Although some cuddy cabin boats are nose heavy, the superb balance of the beefy Gulfstream's 4,600-pound hull helps to make this an easy boat to drive — even in these chaotic conditions. The standard hydraulic trim tabs have position indicator lights, so you'll never wonder what position they're in, and they fully retract when the keys are



turned off to keep a low profile when fishing and trailering. The helm setup is ideal, with Yamaha's large easy-to-read square LCD gauges and good visibility through the tall windshield that has vents for comfort, which comes in handy on days like today when you deploy the optional front and side Isenglass cockpit enclosures that protect you from spray. The standard Ritchie compass is set behind the wheel on a pedestal, and the large area on the dash behind the lockable cover has plenty of room for a pair of large-screen electronics.





A quick run to the relatively calm Bogue Sound for a performance test confirms that the pair of Yamaha 150s is indeed a good match for the 23-and-a-half-footer. Jumping on plane with little bowrise in just 5.1 seconds, the 232 accelerates to 30 mph in 9.2 seconds. The top-speed runs in opposite directions tell the tale of the wind and tide, with runs of

48 mph in one direction and 42 in the other, for an average of 45 mph. With the maximum horsepower of twin 150s <sup>2003</sup> strapped onto the extended engine bracket, which makes the 232 drive like a longer boat, you can expect a top speed in the low 50s.

At first, the Gulfstream 232 is pointed directly into the head seas, but with off-

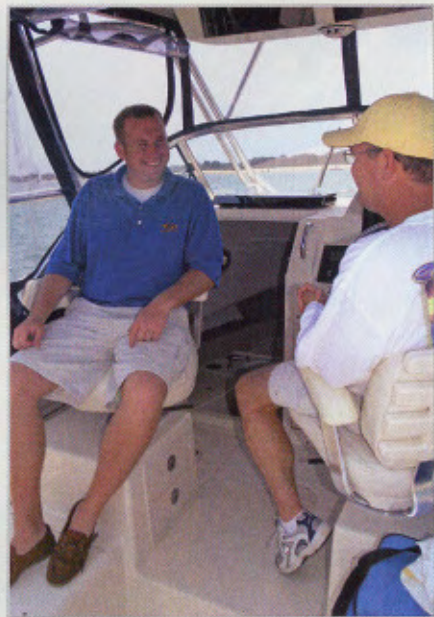
shore fishing clearly not in the cards, a turn to port puts them on course to duck behind Shackleford Banks. Here there's a gaggle of fishing boats working the drop-off, 50 yards off the sandy shoreline that's complete with wild horses that are said to be descended from Spanish-bred horses brought by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1585.

Although this boat's automatic anchoring system consists mainly of a strapping new Grady-White sales assistant named Justin Wallace, a popular option is an electric windlass with a plow anchor that tucks up neatly underneath the pulpit. It doesn't take long to figure out one of the huge advantages of the Gulfstream 232 when four regulation-sized fishermen bait-up and cast in the 56 square-foot cockpit without rubbing elbows. The extra-wide 9-foot-3-inch beam gives you additional fishing space and also enhances side-to-side stability, although in most states this extra width requires you to jump through the wide-load hoops when trailering to be in full compliance.

Jim Hardin, compliance manager at Grady-White, rigs the rods with the help of the built-in tackle storage set into the helm seat pedestals. One of the smarter fishing features is the four hard-top rocket launcher rod holders that are attached to the side support tubes rather than being up top, where only an NBA rebound leader can access them. And trollers will tell you that when using the usual sky-high holders while presenting a spread, it's darn near impossible for a person of normal height to get a rod out when there's a large fish tethered to the other end. The 232 has loads of rod storage with room for six under the gunwales, four on top, and rack storage for four more in the lockable cabin, for a total capacity of 18 when you get the hard top option, which is a good move because then you can order the 15-foot radial outriggers. Offshore anglers will love the huge 297-quart fish-box across the stern that's long enough for oversized pelagic species.

When retrieving the rods from the cabin rack, your eyes are quickly drawn to





the bunk bed, which is a first for Grady-White. In daytime configuration the lower bunk is a single, but when more sleepover capacity is needed, there's a filler cushion that gives a pair of adults plenty of stretching-out room down under. The 232 comes standard with a top-loading icebox with overboard drain, sink with spigot fed by a 12-gallon tank, with lots of storage space for food and beverages, and a single-burner butane stove with a removable cover that you can turn around to create more food prep counter space. The optional Porta-Potti is neatly concealed under an easy-to-lift hatch on the

starboard side.

One of the things that sets the Gulfstream apart from many fishing boats is revealed while waiting for the first strike: there are actually places to sit other than the gunwale. Most prominent is the easy-to-deploy stern bench that folds down quickly when not in use. Then

you have the deluxe Pompanette helm seats, which have enough clearance to face rearward. There's even a place to rest your feet on top of the 265-quart fish box on the starboard side, which also makes a handy drink cooler. On the port side, you can rest your feet on the 34-gallon lighted livewell that features a full column distribution inlet that gently supplies a large volume of raw water without subjecting delicate bait to the heavy-duty "wash cycle" found on most livewells.

Although the new Gulfstream 232 is technically a redesign, you will see many new models from Grady-White that are

just that, for the simple reason that they aren't likely to change the SeaV2 hull anytime soon — because it works so darn well under many challenging conditions. So the new models are either going to be larger or they'll have new liners, decks, updated helms, and newly designed cabins, which is what you have here. Grady-White listens carefully to its owners and consistently delivers boats that are tweaked to the nth degree. As a result, Grady-White owners are some of the most enthusiastic and loyal in the business, as evidenced by their unprecedented five consecutive J.D. Power and Associates awards for having the highest customer satisfaction for coastal boat owners (17 to 28 feet).

The base price for the Gulfstream 232 with twin Yamaha F150s is \$99,890, which is certainly on the high end of the scale, but what you get for the money is a highly competent compact cuddy cabin fishing boat with a high level of fit and finish that's capable of cruising to the Bahamas or is just as happy fishing inshore waters at home. Oh, that big "fish" that put the crew through their paces turned out to be a gigantic stingray the size of Ali Baba's flying carpet. But that's OK, because like Rocky, it's all about the fight, not the end result. 