

BY JIM HENDRICKS

GRADY-WHITE EXPRESS 330

Taking Versatility and Comfort to New Levels



MMy adventure aboard Grady-White's new Express 330 began in the calm, quiet predawn hours at the Palafox Pier & Marina in Pensacola, Florida. Capt. Sean Garrison, a sales executive for the MarineMax dealership in Pensacola, was waiting. Garrison's also a member of the MarineMax fishing team. "We have a nice weather window, so let's get out there and see what's biting," he said as I stepped aboard.

Before heading offshore in pursuit of mahimahi, we stopped outside Pensacola Pass to buy live cigar minnows from a bait vendor. The lighted, pale-blue interior of the 330's covered 45-gallon livewell, abaft the starboard seating module, pampered the 6- to 7-inch-long baitfish.

The rising sun gave me a chance to check out the cockpit. Aft the port seating module, I found a covered electric grill with a refrigerator below. This 330 included plenty of cold storage, including a fridge in the cabin, a chiller under the port helm seat, and an optional chiller in the 254-quart transom fish box.

I noticed a flip-up bench seat across the transom for crew on long runs. My tester was also equipped with a second flip-up bench

along the port side. Both seats fold up quickly when it's time for fishing.

TOP-NOTCH

My 330 test boat featured the new AV2 hardtop with an integrated tempered-glass windshield, measuring 7 1/2 feet wide. It offered an expansive view of the ocean ahead. Sweeping side windows reach about three-quarters of the way to the top, where each intersects with the windshield at the forward powder-coated aluminum hardtop supports. Available Clear2Sea acrylic panels fully enclosed the sides. My boat also had a motorized canvas SureShade, which can extend over the cockpit, 8 feet 4 inches wide by

The elevated bridge deck of the Grady-White Express 330 features a central captain's chair and seats that convert to loungers on both sides.

5 feet 9 inches long, for protection from the sun's rays.

When the day grows sultry, open the motorized vent at the top of the windshield or turn on the 12,000 Btu air conditioning for the bridge deck. A second 12,000 Btu system cools the cabin. A 4 kW diesel generator powers the air conditioning and other systems.

Propelled by twin Yamaha F350 outboards, we cruised out at 4,000 rpm and 32 mph, burning about 28 gallons of gas per hour for 1.15 mpg. For the super-smooth ride, credit the Grady-White SeaV2 variable-deadrise running surface.

The elevated bridge-deck seating includes a central swiveling captain's chair with fold-down armrests and an angled footrest below the helm. On the starboard side are aft- and forward-facing seats with a flip-up platform to create a single lounge. The port seat can be extended into a lounger.

A motorized, retractable instrument panel accommodates a pair of 12-inch multifunction displays with an auto-pilot display in between. A Ritchie SR-2 Venture vertical-mount compass helped lead the way, while a Yamaha Command Link Plus display offered readings of rpm, speed and fuel

PERFORMANCE

POWER Twin Yamaha F350 outboards
LOAD 300 gal. fuel, 40 gal. water, two crew
TOP SPEED 50.6 mph @ 5,800 rpm
TIME TO 30 MPH 8.5 sec.
BEST MPG 1.22 @ 26.9 mph (3,500 rpm)

HULL

LOA 35 ft. 10 in.
BEAM 11 ft. 7 in.
DEADRISE 19 degrees
WEIGHT Approx. 10,840 lb. (w/o power)
DRAFT 2 ft. 1 in. (motors up)
FUEL 331 gal.
MAX POWER 700 hp

MSRP AS TESTED \$519,573

GRADY-WHITE BOATS
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consumption, as well as trim angle.

My tester also included SeaStar Solutions power-assist steering, Lenco trim tabs and a Lewmar bow-thruster with a joystick control for docking.

On the offshore grounds, I manned the wheel as Garrison set out a trolling spread, including two lines from the hardtop-mounted Taco Marine Grand Slam 380 18-foot outriggers. With both engines in gear, I found a good trolling speed at 1,700 rpm and 8.5 mph, where the twin outboards burned six gallons per hour for 1.4 mpg.

MAHI STRIKE

About 15 minutes into our troll, the port rigger snapped free, and a 20-pound bull mahi went airborne. I pulled the throttle back to idle and scurried down into the cockpit to pick up the rod. At this point I came to appreciate the cockpit coaming bolsters cushioning my legs. A diamond nonskid sole and toe rails helped me maintain safe footing.

As I eased the mahi closer, Garrison grabbed the leader and deftly gaffed the brightly colored bull. After a few

pictures, we transferred the fish to the chilled transom fish box and rinsed the deck with the raw-water washdown. The 330 has a second hose bib in the cockpit for a freshwater washdown as well. My tester also featured a retractable freshwater transom-shower hose.

After resetting the lines, I decided to check out the cabin. A companionway



Capt. Sean Garrison proved that the Express 330 is an effective offshore fishing machine by putting this 20-pound mahi in the box.



Above: Padded coaming bolsters cushion Capt. Sean Garrison's legs as he battles a strong fish. **Right:** The refrigerated fish locker features a divider to separate items such as frozen bait from your catch.

on the port side of the bridge deck leads to a spacious cabin with more than 6 feet of headroom. I found a master V-berth that sleeps two, and a cozy, easy-to-access midcabin berth for two. The 330's cabin also includes a dinette that converts to a single berth.

The portside galley features a fiddled faux-marble countertop and sink with hot and cold water, wood-veneer cabinetry with self-closing hinges and magnetic latches, an electric range top, a microwave and, as mentioned earlier, a fridge. Inset into the forward portion of the cabinetry was an entertainment system that included a 19-inch flat-screen TV. A roomy fiberglass head compartment on the starboard side offers a shower, vanity and sink, and china toilet.



VERSATILE MACHINE

After a few hours of fishless trolling, Garrison suggested that we fish one of his secret wrecks 15 miles away. As I cleared lines, I noted the two integral swim platforms across the transom, with a walkway between that lets you easily traverse from one platform to the other. A telescoping, fold-up stainless-steel boarding ladder on the starboard side lets you easily climb back aboard, and the outward-opening transom door in the starboard quarter offers access to and from the cockpit.

With the relatively flat seas, I got a chance to see how the 330 performed on the run to the wreck. Turning Yamaha Saltwater Series II SDS 17-inch-pitch three-blade stainless-steel propellers, the Grady jumps on plane in six seconds, reaching 30 mph in 8.5 seconds. Top speed was 50.6 mph at 5,800 rpm, where the twin Yamahas burned 60 gallons per hour for 0.84 mpg. Optimum cruising efficiency occurred at about 26.9 mph (3,500 rpm), where the counterrotating outboards burned 22 gallons per hour for 1.22 mpg.

While we decided to drift, anchoring on the wreck would have been easy, thanks to the standard electric windlass. Ten-inch-wide walkways aside the cabin, grab rails along the hardtop, and a one-piece stainless-steel bow rail allow you to safely make your way to and from the bow deck.

On our first drift over the wreck, we both hooked and landed amberjack. On the second drift, I caught a nice lane snapper. Garrison also hooked a fish, but it was quickly inhaled by a larger predator, which hooked itself. With line burning off the reel, I manned the helm to give chase. While we both suspected a shark, we hoped for a big tuna.

The electronic throttle and shift allowed me to maneuver easily throughout the hour-long fight. Ultimately, the fish wore the 80-pound-test braided line and we lost it. "I don't know about you, but I've pulled on enough fish today," said Garrison, now drenched with sweat. We stowed the rods in the two angled holders on each aft hardtop support for the run back to Pensacola Pass.

On the ride home, as we enjoyed music from the Fusion stereo system, I marveled at the combination of creature comforts and angling amenities, and dreamed of the far-flung destinations my family and I might explore aboard the Grady-White Express 330. If a fishing boat can be said to possess good feng shui, this one has it. 🎣



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