

BOATS

Grady-White Freedom 255

The Freedom 255 is a very nice package for the man with a family who plans on covering the gamut...

By Gary Caputi | January 19, 2011

Back in the day, we used to call boats like Grady-White's new Freedom 255 a bowrider because of the bow seating. While the term has fallen into disuse, the basic design certainly has not, as this highly regarded North Carolina boatbuilder continues to expand its offering of dual-console models. The 255 was added to fill the niche between the 225 and 275, completing the Freedom line of six models spanning 18 to 30 feet, but why so much emphasis on dual-console boats?



"The variety of coastal waters and big inland lakes and the growing recreational opportunities for fishing, diving, exploring, sightseeing and other activities called for the evolution of a new kind of boat from Grady-White," says Joey Weller, vice president of sales and marketing. "We developed the Freedom series to provide the versatility for a family to enjoy them all."

My first impression of the Freedom 255 was not exactly what I expected - equipped with the optional hardtop and a pair of Taco Grand Slam outriggers, it looked mighty fishy. The 255 shares the same soft-riding SV-2 hull and unmistakable shear as Grady-White's more dedicated fish boats and offers ample fishing room in the cockpit (60 square feet), along with four gunwale and two transom flush-mount rod holders, all nicely positioned for when Dad wants to go trolling.

We motored out of the inlet and into a strong southwest wind that was whipping up a nasty chop on top of an already large swell. Undaunted, we made it about five miles offshore, with conditions worsening before we agreed that we were both a little old for the beating to come, especially when the 50-foot charter boats all opted to hug the beach and fish for Spanish mackerel. Closer to shore, we spent the next couple of hours fishing in schools of the voracious macks while I got a feel for the performance of the 255 in a choppy 3- to 5-foot sea. The boat handled it well. We trolled in every direction to the sea, and while the strong wind occasionally caught the spray and blew it back in our faces, the boat was quite comfortable. When we stopped to cast or reel in fish, it rode the waves gracefully, with no tendency to snap-roll or heel over when we took them abeam. It offered a stable fishing platform and a confident ride when operated within the confines of the sea conditions.

Later we took the boat inside to get a better idea of the overall performance. Our 255 was fully loaded, with weight topping 7,500 pounds, but Yamaha's powerhouse F350 gave it plenty of get up and go. Acceleration was brisk, and the boat charged from 0 to 30 mph in about 10 seconds, with a top speed of 47 mph at 6,100 rpm. Cruise was most efficient at 4,000 rpm, with the boat running a tad under 30 mph while burning 13.3 gallons per hour, getting a respectable 2.2 mpg. Without the hardtop and with a slightly lighter load, it would most likely be a 50 mph vessel.

The Freedom 255 is well thought out, a testament to Grady-White's heritage of building fishing boats. The helm station featured an electric adjustable captain's chair, an adjustable stainless-steel wheel, a Yamaha Command Link II gauge package, a trim-tab actuator switch and enough flat space to mount a Raymarine E120 widescreen. When



the fishing calls for casting, just open the center section of the windshield and stroll forward on a level deck that runs all the way to the anchor locker. There are two insulated compartments, 165-quart to starboard and 80-quart on the port side, under the bow seats. The anchor locker will hold plenty of rode, and an optional windlass can be installed at the factory.

In the cockpit are an optional 26-gallon livewell (when this is not ordered the space serves as an insulated cooler compartment), under-gunwale rod storage, a transom door and a clever stern seat that is the easiest to operate I've seen to date. Toe rails run the length of the gunwales, a nice touch for fishing, and a hatch affords access to the batteries, battery switches, pumps and seacocks.

The Freedom 255 is a very nice package for the man with a family who plans on covering the gamut, from fishing to water skiing to picnics on the bay with neighbors and friends. And with the right options, it is a very fishable craft indeed.

Grady-White Freedom 255

LOA.....24'9"

Draft.....21"

Beam.....8'6"

Deadrise.....20 degrees

Hull weight.....4,375 lbs.

Fuel.....130 gals.

Water.....20 gals.

Max hp.....350

Grady-White Boats: 252-752-2111 • www.gradywhite.com

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