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JULY 2025

Lakeland BOATING



GRADY-WHITE FREEDOM 345

Well-established seaworthiness.

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PORT OF CALL

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SPOTLIGHTS

Axopar * Blackfin * Grand Banks * Solara

BOAT TEST

By John Page Williams

GRADY-WHITE FREEDOM 345

EXCEPTIONAL ATTENTION TO DETAIL.



If Grady-White's Freedom 345 dual console rides on the same 33-foot, 6-inch SeaV² hull shape as its predecessor, the Freedom 335, how does it qualify as a new model? Well, Joe Hunter, Grady-White's VP of engineering, is so glad you asked.

Last year, his team brought some well-received innovations to the company's big new Freedom 415, including styling and structural improvements to hardtop design and interior layout. Feedback from owners and dealers, to whom Grady-White listens intently, and observations from the engineers themselves

(who are all boaters) suggested that they could scale those improvements down to the well-proven hull effectively. With their trademark, "exceptional attention to detail," the team considered what worked well on the 335 and what they could improve. In advanced planning of a new model, the company convenes dealers from all over the country to hammer out features their customers need, along with provisions for regional dealer customization — for example, adding rodholders for Great Lakes trollers. That process created the new Freedom 345, which was introduced earlier this year.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GRADY-WHITE

FEEDBACK FROM OWNERS

The 345 is large enough for a couple or a family to entertain and/or fish comfortably and safely in big water, with traditional dual console amenities like a spacious and adaptable open bow; a changing room/electric Vacuflush toilet/shower in the starboard console; and a berth, bench seat, television and microwave in the port console. There’s seating for two at the starboard helm, opposite a settee with a table to port. The cockpit includes a rigging station/wetbar with a Corian countertop, a freshwater sink, a refrigerator drawer, storage drawers, a trash bin and an electric grill to port. To starboard is a pair of mezzanine seats, one of which converts into a lounge. Astern is a sturdy, folding transom seat for two.

Feedback from owners who had experience with the 415 led to eliminating the 335’s transom door in favor of cockpit side doors both to port and to starboard, and a boarding ladder that can be used on either side. This arrangement provides great water access for multiple swimmers, stress-free landing of large fish, and easy boarding from a floating dock on either side, all while saving space at the transom. Fuel fills on each side ease access to gas docks.

The 415’s new hardtop design with integrated windshield adapted well to the 345, providing structural strength and more coverage while saving space. Fold-up clear2sea acrylic panels on the sides seal out spray when necessary, minimizing canvas (an aft drop curtain is optional). An electrically controlled panel in the top center of the windshield provides ventilation, and a SureShade integrated into the top extends over the cockpit for even more sun protection.

THOUGHTFUL ENGINEERING

The Freedom 345 is equipped with a 5kW Panda diesel generator that drives all of these features and more, including several electrically adjustable seats; a Seakeeper 3 to keep everyone comfortable on breezy, bumpy days; reverse-cycle air conditioning in both consoles and at the helm; a bow thruster; and a Yamaha Helm Master EX joystick system. The Panda and the Seakeeper nestle in a spacious and readily accessible electromechanical space beneath the cockpit sole. SolidWorks CAD software allowed Grady-White’s engineering team to design all of these features and work out the spaces for them in the hull. Then, naval architect Craig Obara at Ray Hunt Design, who has helped design all of Grady-White’s SeaV² hulls, collaborated with the Grady-White team to work out weight distribution and design interior hull structures for the 345. That exercise includes the strong Seakeeper mount, which must safely distribute the internal stresses created when waves try to push the hull around and the gyro says “No!” The team drew in a small, triangular bottom pad at the transom to provide good water flow to the propeller of the center engine when a new owner opts to power the 345 with triple Yamaha 4.3-liter, V6 350s.

Lamination of the robust hull and liner is arguably the highest expression of Grady-White’s “exceptional attention to detail.” The company invests in training and retaining the craftspeople of that department. In-house CNC machines cut precise, engineered kits of glass fabrics for each model. Lamination teams

position the kits precisely in their molds, apply resin, and roll out the resulting laminates to achieve the designed combination of fabrics and resin in the hull, liner and smaller parts. The hull is relatively simple compared to the liner, but it includes important details like the SeaV² hulls’ lifting strakes, which must have exact, sharp edges to separate water most efficiently for lift and damping spray. After the first several layers of glass are laid and rolled tightly into the mold, a team member fills the inside of each strake with putty. Successive layers of glass in the overall layup bond the resulting solid strake into the surrounding hull structure. As to the liner, look closely at photos of the Freedom 345’s spacious interior. Imagine the care and patience it takes to roll out the wet glass inside each of its intricate features to produce such a large, complex part that is so essential to the multiple missions of the Freedom 345. This process is the fiberglass equivalent of cabinetwork in hardwood.

BIG, STRONG BOAT

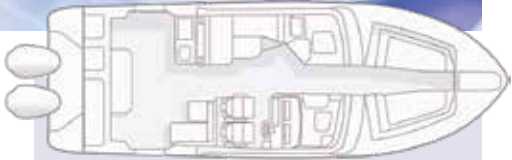
Power options for the Freedom 345 are twin Yamaha 450-hp, 5.6-liter XTO Offshore V8s or the triple 350s. The latter setup powered the test boat we ran out of Morehead City, North Carolina, this past spring.

These new engines are silky smooth. Three propellers gave the hull plenty of acceleration, which provided useful control for handling gnarly seas in Beaufort Inlet. The 345 is a big, strong boat, with Grady-White’s well-established seaworthiness baked in. The surrounding waters were rough enough to dissuade us from running at speeds above the mid-30s, but reliable company performance figures reveal top speed in the low 50s, with most efficient cruise in the upper 20s. We were most impressed with the rig’s range of efficient cruising speeds, from the upper teens, through the 20s and most of the 30s.

Skippers will find it easy to adjust speed to existing conditions, whether running offshore to fish, exploring on a long day cruise, or towing a tube in protected water. Both engine combinations provide good performance, with a slight edge going to the triple 350s in speed and efficiency, but at around a \$50,000 cost premium over the twin 450s, plus additional complexity and maintenance.

While Grady-White’s design team sets up the boats to adapt to many different fisheries, the most traditional are coastal blue water. For trolling walleyes, trout and salmon on the Great Lakes, however, local dealers collaborate with accessory brands like Scotty, Cannon, Michigan Stinger, Cisco Fishing Systems, Church Tackle, Off Shore Tackle and Amish Outfitters for specialized gear like downriggers, lures, extra rodholders, planer boards and trolling bags. To adapt a Freedom 345 to these complex tackle systems, a great source of hands-on education is a local Grady-White club. The premier is the Lake Erie Grady-White Club. This active club sponsors educational seminars, tournaments for walleyes and yellow perch, and social engagements that enthusiastically carry on Grady-White’s tradition of combining families, friends and fishing.

Grady-White’s new Freedom 345 offers a proven hull with a new power option and expanded features for both fishing and family outings. That’s “exceptional attention to detail” indeed. ★



GRADY-WHITE
FREEDOM 345

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 33'6"

Beam: 11'7"

Draft: 27"

Weight (w/out engines): 12,510 lbs.

Fuel Capacity: 300 gals.

Water Capacity: 32 gals.

Max Power: 1,050 hp

Base Price: Contact dealer

GRADYWHITE.COM

DEALERS

South Shore Marine
SOUTHSHOREMARINE.COM

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DESMASDONS.COM

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DRUMMONDMARINE.COM

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New design for hardtop and windshield keeps out nasty Great Lakes weather. Performance is remarkably efficient for a large, fast, seaworthy boat.



More rodholders for Great Lakes-specific fishing techniques, please! Is there any way to find a couple more inches of headroom in the starboard console?

