

# TEST DRIVES



## Southport 28

This new center console proves that a pretty boat can catch fish, too. By Jeanne Craig

**M**y friend called recently to talk about a Southport center console. The hard-core fishboat with the yacht-club lines had impressed him and most of his friends. I asked him where he had seen it. I was curious because Southport is a new builder, just 2 years old, so there aren't many models out there yet. I wasn't surprised to learn the boat was entering a narrow river off the Long Island Sound, a place the local boaters call "Ego Alley" for the high percentage of semicustom and custom builds along its shores. You won't find a cookie-cutter cruiser on that stretch of water. As for a center console, it has to do a lot more than catch fish to raise eyebrows among these boat owners.

A Southport is unique for the way it combines a tough-as-nails offshore ride with the striking lines and stylish detail

### AT A GLANCE

#### SOUTHPORT 28

<b>Base Price</b> (w/test power).....	\$153,130
<b>LOA</b> .....	28'6"
<b>Beam</b> .....	10'6"
<b>Draft</b> (engines down).....	2'6"
<b>Disp.</b> .....	5,800 lbs.
<b>Transom Deadrise</b> .....	22 degrees
<b>Water</b> .....	20 gals.
<b>Fuel</b> .....	250 gals.

you just hate to cover with fish blood. But even with that gorgeous tumblehome aft, fishing is what this brand was meant to do.

The first boat from this North Carolina builder was a 26-footer, but Southport recently launched a new 28. Like the smaller model, it's designed specifically for twin four-stroke outboards. How so? The hull has been engineered to match the weight of the engines, so the boat yields a soft ride, and also produces plenty of punch in the mid-range.

I tested the 28 with the help of Hobby Lobby Marine, a Southport dealer in New Jersey. The wind was blowing more than 20 knots as we ran through three-foot seas on Barnegat Bay. The lifting strakes and spray rails of the deep-V hull, designed by C. Raymond Hunt, directed water away from the boat, and aside from a little spray we took in one aggressive turn, the ride was dry. More impressive was the comfort. Considering the bumpy conditions, we should have made a number of hard, brace-yourself landings, but that wasn't the case. Just as noticeable was the lack of rattling hardware and banging hatches; also missing was the racket that a stiff chop can make when it continuously hammers a hull. All the result of Southport's top-notch construction. The 28 is made of fiberglass and composites, right down to the stringer system and transom, and it's manufac-

### PERFORMANCE

**Test Power:** (2) 250-hp Yamaha four-stroke outboards. Power options include twin 225-hp Yamaha four-stroke outboards.

RPM	MPH	GPH	dB-A
1000	6.2	1.8	71
1500	7.5	3.1	71
2000	8.6	5.7	72
2500	11.1	9.6	81
3000	18.5	10.0	82
3500	26.7	13.8	82
4000	31.4	15.6	84
4500	35.0	22.8	86
5000	39.1	26.6	86
5500	43.8	32.9	87
6100	48.5	42.8	89

Speeds measured by GPS in Barnegat Bay, N.J., in strong winds and three-foot seas w/two people on board, a full tank of fuel and no water. Sound levels measured at the helm in dB-A.

**Standard Equipment** (major items): Electric windlass, anchor and rode; aluminum toe-rails; six flush-mounted rod holders; under-gunwale rod racks; saltwater washdown; removable fish box w/macerator and over-board pumpout; bait rigging station at transom; two transom doors; cockpit bolsters; VacuFlush toilet w/holding tank; hydraulic tilt steering; T-top w/LED lighting, spreader light and storage for life jackets.

**Optional Equipment** (major items): Towing package w/bridle; console side curtains; outriggers w/rigging; stereo CD-player w/four speakers; stainless boarding ladder.

**Warranty:** Seven-year structural hull coverage; one-year cosmetic warranty.

**Southport Boat Works**, [www.southport-boatworks.com](http://www.southport-boatworks.com). Reader service #164.

tured with just four major pieces.

With a pair of 250-hp Yamahas, top speed was 48.5 mph, but the wind, seas and full tank of fuel slowed us down. In company tests, the 28 ran 53.9 mph with the same engines. However, speed isn't key on the Southport—fuel economy is the talking point. The 28 posts close to 2 mph across the usable offshore range.

At \$153,130, it's competitive with brands like Grady-White, Pursuit and Regulator. As a newcomer, Southport doesn't have the long-established reputations of those makes, but it does offer good performance and a style that is really its own. The only person who might have a problem with this boat is the hard-core angler who doesn't like his outboards mounted so far aft on an integrated transom bracket, but there don't seem to be too many of those guys out there, at least not in Ego Alley. ☺