

SOUTHPORT 28

Southern Belle This elegant, new Center Console will light your fire By John Wooldridge

Before I saw the Southport 28 Center Console for the first time, sitting in a slip at the Bay Bridge Marina in Stevensville, Md., I probably was feeling a bit over the whole center console thing. Now I know I was being prepared by a higher authority to be overwhelmed by the beauty of the Southport's lines. Wide-flaring

bows, a sleek and springy sheerline, and transom corners both rounded and reversed, combined to create a boat I could stop and admire every time I walked down to its slip.

So when Curt Stevens, president of the Marine Group offered me a ride, I accepted in a heartbeat. Since the Chesapeake Bay waters were relatively calm on the day of our ride, once I cleared the No Wake area I immediately pushed the throttles to their stops. Twin 225 hp Mercury Verado four-strokes put the lightly loaded boat on plane in a little over three seconds and rewarded me with 47-knot top speeds. Pulling the throttles back to 3000 rpm, I put the Southport 28 through a series of gradual and sharp turns, searching for some hint of chine tripping, untoward rolling or loss of control. There was none. Next I throttled up and went in search of steep-sided wakes from fast-moving commercial ships or large motoryachts in the area. When I did find them, the Southport 28 displayed an awesome ability to part waves quickly, lift gradually and reenter without slamming. I felt like a skateboard hotshot in the movie *Lords of Dogtown*.

Frank Longino and Alton Herdon, Southport owners and industry veterans who know a thing or two about successful boatbuilding, started with the premise that the 28 had to be a

HUNT MAGIC: A deep-V hull and generously flared bow give the Southport 28 a smooth and dry ride at speed.

good-looking boat, a great riding boat and a superb fishing machine that could switch gears and be a fine platform for family excursions. For beauty and performance, they turned to C. Raymond Hunt Associates, who designed the Southport 28 with a fine entry that continuously warps to a deadrise angle of 22 degrees at the transom—providing plenty of sharpness for a smooth ride across a wide range of wave conditions as well as support for a pair of 225 hp or 250 hp four-stroke outboards, the preferred power. Wide chines aft and sharp-lifting strakes aid lift, add balance and work together with the widely flared bow to produce a dry-running, soft-riding hull.

Fishing features are equally well planned. Port and starboard doors flank the transom for easy boarding and fish fighting, with an integral bait box and a sink with shower nozzle in the transom. There's an 18-gallon removable fishbox with macerator in the sole aft, wide passageways around the console for fighting fish around the boat, and large flat deck surfaces forward for jiggling or cast net throwing. The leaning bar seat houses a 45-gallon oval live well, three tackle storage compartments and conveniences like holders for knife and pliers and a bar for hanging rigs.

For family convenience, the 157-gallon insulated fishbox forward is gasketed, so it can function as dry storage, and doubles as a padded lounge seat for two. The console houses a VacuFlush marine toilet in a private compartment that is spacious enough for most adults to change clothes in. Notable features include toe rails beneath the gunwales, flush deck cleats and handrails, and the high windscreen protecting the helm. When it comes to beauty, performance and family-friendly usability, in my opinion, the Southport 28 CC has it all. □

Contact: Southport Boat Works, (910) 383-0365; www.southport-boatworks.com. Reader Service # 242.

LOA: 28'6"
Beam: 10'6"
Draft: 1'7" (hull)
Transom Deadrise: 22 degrees
Displ.: 5,800 lb.
Fuel: 250 gal.
Water: 20 gal.
Black Water: 12 gal.
Naval Architect: C. Raymond Hunt Associates
Engines as Tested: 2x 250 hp Mercury Verado 4-stroke outboards
Optional Power: 2x 250 hp Yamaha 4-stroke outboards
Props: 17" x 15.5", 3-blade stainless Quicksilver
Steering: Mercury Marine
Engine Controls: Mercury Marine
Base Price: \$156,411



RPM	KNOTS	GPH	dB(A) HELM
1000	6.3	3.1	69
1500	8.2	3.8	72
2000	9.5	5.7	76
2500	15.0	7.8	78
3000	21.7	10.9	83
3500	27.0	13.4	85
4000	32.1	18.3	86
4500	35.9	27.9	87
5000	39.9	32.1	88
5500	43.3	40.5	89
6000	46.9	46.6	89

Speeds, in knots, were measured with GPS off Kent Island, Md., in one-foot seas with 1/2 fuel, no water, no black water and two people on board. Air temperature was 69 degrees, with 13-knot winds. Average water depth was more than 50 feet. Fuel burn for both engines was recorded with engine gauges.