

TIGHT PACKAGE

Howard's new 25 Bullet is as solid as its larger brother, the 28 Bullet.



From left: The Gaffrig by Livorsi gauges complemented the Ritchie compass at the helm. Down below, the cabin was fairly spacious, with a V-berth and facing lounges. The engine compartment featured Berber carpet around the MerCruiser 496 Mag HO motor and stowage boxes covered with fabric.

ONE RIDE CONVINCED US THAT HOWARD'S HARD-hitting 28 Bullet was one of the best sport boats in its size range. And it came as no surprise that the 25 Bullet was just as solid, just as efficient and just as tightly built as its big brother.

There were a couple of surprises, chief among them the price: \$79,990 as we tested it. Take away the optional Dana trim tabs, hydraulic scissor hinges and seat bases, dual batteries and the SmartCraft setup and you walk away for \$76,095. What a steal. And you know what? Once you drive it, you won't feel you should have bought a bigger boat. Another surprise? How about 73.7 mph on MerCruiser 496 Mag HO power? There were more, but we'll get to them—all in due time.

PERFORMANCE

First things first. Power from the 496 Mag HO was channeled through a 1.5:1 Bravo One X drive, which was fitted with a 15 1/4" x 26" four-blade stainless-steel propeller. That propulsion package was good not only for the 73.7 mph top speed, but also some efficient midrange figures. Check it out.

At 3,000 rpm the boat was going 43 mph and at 3,500 rpm it hit 50 mph. Add another 500 rpm and you are cruising along at a few ticks over 61 mph. Acceleration was decent for the power. Going from 30 to 50 mph took 5.5 seconds and 40 to 60 mph took 6.8 seconds.

At all but the highest speeds, tracking was excellent. Even at the top, the boat only required a bit more driver input and we suspect that replacing the cable steering with full-hydraulic would have cured it. Chopping throttles abruptly produced a discernible deceleration reaction. Gradual deceleration was the answer to that characteristic.

Another characteristic we found was that the boat pointed the bow up a bit when coming on plane, but it planed out in a respectable 5.4 seconds. Adding tab cut that time to 4.2 seconds and reduced bow rise.

The boat needed no tabs during hard acceleration or during our top speed tests. Likewise, it slashed through slalom turn after slalom turn at speeds approaching 60 mph without skipping, hopping or sliding.

Credit that handling prowess to the hull design, a straightforward single-step 22.5-degree V-bottom with a pair of outer strakes that ran bow to stern, an 8-inch notch, a sharp keel and a 5-inch-wide chine angled at about 3 degrees negative.

However we would be remiss if we didn't report how the boat "felt" throughout our tests. In this case, a quote from lead test driver Bob Teague says it best.

"Every once in a while you get into a boat and it reminds you of a really fine automobile," he said. "It's quiet and solid, and doesn't



TestResults

TEST CONDITIONS

Temperature	71 degrees
Humidity	64 percent
Wind speed	2-4 mph
Sea conditions	1' chop
Elevation	Sea level

HULL INFORMATION

Deadrise at transom	22.5 degrees
Centerline	25'2"
Beam	8'2"
Hull weight	4,100 pounds

PRICING INFORMATION

Base retail	\$69,995
Price as tested	\$79,990

ENGINE & PROPELLER

Engine	MerCruiser 496 Mag HO
Cylinder type	V-8
Cubic-inch displacement/horsepower	496/425
Lower-unit gear ratio	1.5:1
Propeller	Mercury Bravo One 15 1/4" x 26"

OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT

Upgrade to MerCruiser 496 Mag HO engine (\$6,100), custom billet seat bases (\$1,100), Dana scissor hinges (\$1,050), Dana trim tabs (\$995), SmartCraft SC1000 monitor (\$400) and dual batteries (\$350).

ACCELERATION

5 seconds	28 mph
10 seconds	49 mph
15 seconds	63 mph
20 seconds	68 mph

MIDRANGE ACCELERATION

30-50 mph	5.5 seconds
40-60 mph	6.8 seconds
40-70 mph	14.9 seconds

RPM VS. MPH

1000	.6 mph
1500	.8 mph
2000	22 mph
2500	35 mph
3000	43 mph
3500	50 mph
4000	61 mph
4500	67 mph

TOP SPEED AT RPM

Radar	73.7 mph at 4900
Nordisk Performance Products GPS	72.9 mph

PLANNING

Time to plane	4.2 seconds
Minimum planning speed	17 mph

FUEL ECONOMY

At 25 mph	4 mpg
At 35 mph	3.8 mpg
At 45 mph	3.5 mpg
At 55 mph	3 mpg
At 65 mph	2.5 mpg
At WOT	2.2 mpg

FUEL CAPACITY

	65 gallons
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TEST CONDUCTED AT San Diego

MANUFACTURER

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have any rattles, you can't hear the road noise and all that kind of stuff. This boat kind of reminds me of that. It's got a sophistication about it that exudes quality."

WORKMANSHIP

That quality showed in every aspect of the 25 Bullet. For example, laminating the boat takes 14 days, one layer at a time per day. Company owner Gene Willen explained:

"It's got a two-week mold cure time," he said. "All of our boats stay in the mold for 14 days, and that's not a decision I made. It came from speaking with the people that I buy my fiberglass products from. The chemists that manufacture the products say that they want to see one laminate per day, not multiple laminates. Let it cure properly. So we do the lamination on one day, then the next day we sand everything down. We never put fiberglass up against fiberglass that hasn't been prepped."

In the bilge area, Howard sprays the interior of the laminate with white gelcoat and shoots it with Durotech, a clear coat, which adds luster.

Naturally, the engine was bolted to aluminum L-angles through-bolted to the stringers. All wiring and plumbing was wrapped in conduit. Most of it was tucked up and under the gunwales and was routed to the engine from the transom.

The engine bay also featured gray Berber carpeting and fabric-covered stowage boxes to either side of the engine. To finish off the sides of the bilge, Howard installed padded upholstered panels with vinyl pouches. The underside of the hatch, which lifted on hydraulic Dana scissor hinges, was covered in black fabric that matched the

boxes on the sole of the engine.

On the outside, the hullsides and horizontal surfaces exhibited exemplary shine and were devoid of any waves. In-gelcoat graphics were simple and straightforward, and executed with the same high degree of skill you'll find in the finest West Coast customs.

Protecting it all was an anodized aluminum rubrail with a red rubber insert.

INTERIOR

The beauty of the 25 Bullet lay in its simplicity. For example, the cabin featured a roughly 8-foot-long V-berth with a pair of twin facing lounges farther aft. Nothing more. Oh, except for the four bulkheads in the cabin—thus the solid feel.

Out in the cockpit, Howard perched the front seats on Dana Marine Products billet bases. They were comfortable and placed to offer enough legroom yet still allow the driver to reach all the controls and steering wheel comfortably.

Highlights from the helm include the full Gaffrig by Livorsi instrumentation and levers, a Ritchie compass, Bluewater mechanical indicators for the tabs and drive and the miniature SmartCraft display unit.

All outer passengers would have no trouble hanging on because Howard placed all the grab handles so that your hand literally fell on them when you sat down. Plus, the angle at which they were placed was ergonomically comfortable. Gray Berber carpeting rounded out the interior appointments.

OVERALL

It's difficult to follow an act like the 28 Bullet. However, in the case of the 25 Bullet, Howard made it look easy. ●