



Howard 28 Bullet

Nothing is perfect, but Howard's 28 Bullet comes pretty darn close. In this, our third go-round with the exquisitely crafted 28-footer, we were yet again dazzled by the boat's uncommon manageability and superb performance. Rare indeed is a sport boat that can be deeply appreciated by the relatively inexperienced drivers and those with serious seat time.

In the past, Howard sent the 28 Bullet to our tests with big power, including an exotic 1,000-plus-hp turbocharged mill. This time around, the builder went the stock, warranty-included route with a 500-hp 525EFI engine from Mercury Racing. Even with the milder

motor, the stepped-hull model wowed our test team in every aspect of its performance.

Start with drivability. The boat delivered the kind of predictable, responsive handling that should help build confidence of newcomers to the sport-boat world. For veteran drivers, such positive, sure-footed handling manners translate to knowing they can push the boat to its limits. For novices and veterans, the driving experience is equally delightful.

Top speed for the 28 Bullet was 80 mph—once again, enough to thrill novices and satisfy experts. For experts who want to push it, Howard does offer the 28-footer with bigger power, and as we've learned firsthand, the boat

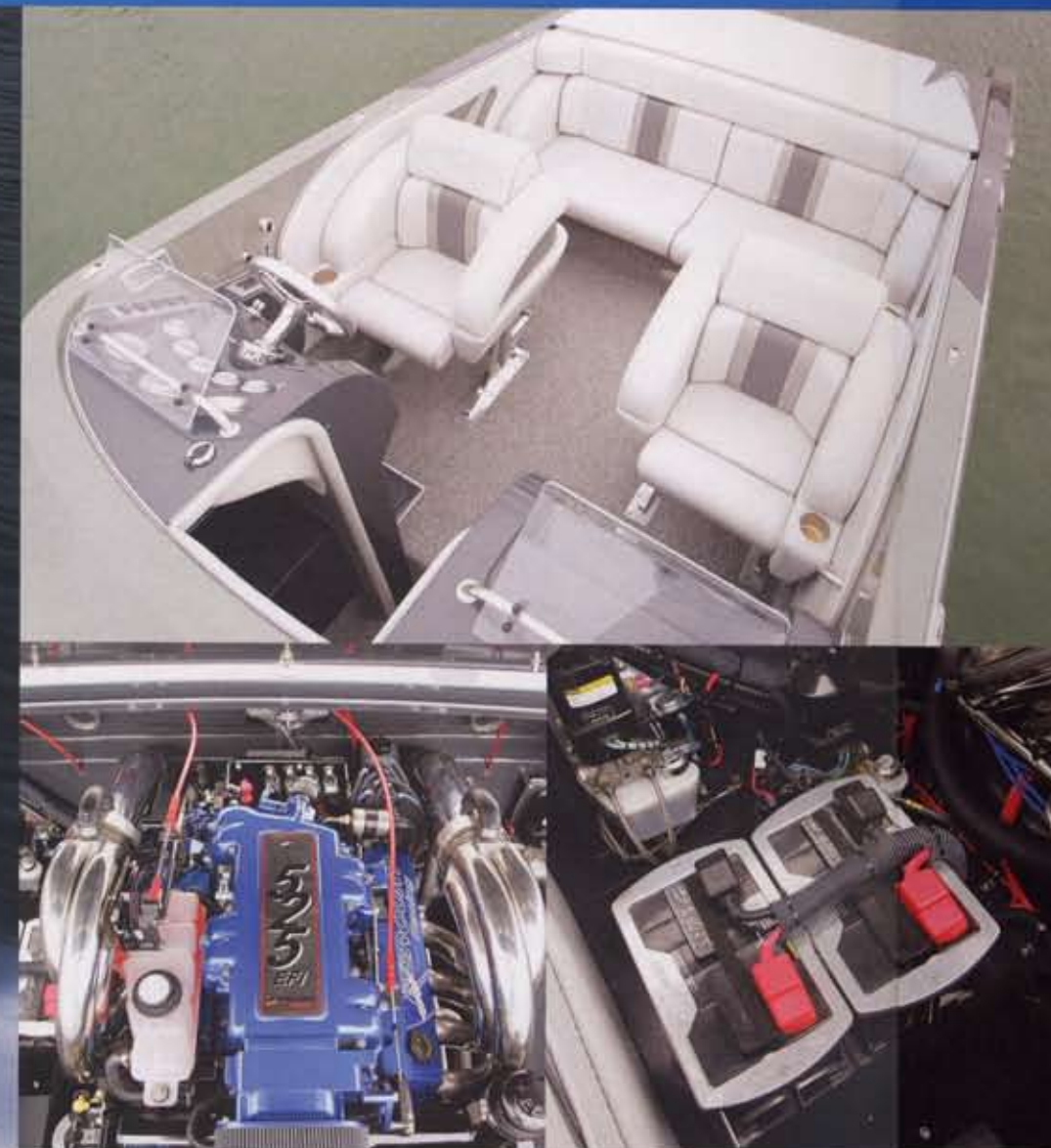
can handle it. But as an 80-mph turnkey package with refined handling, the 28 Bullet is tough to beat. And these days, with insurance premiums up, many experienced buyers are opting for tamer, more reliable engine packages.

Mellow as the power setup was, it did a sweet job getting the 28 Bullet moving. The boat came on plane in 4.3 seconds with its trim tabs down and reached 72 mph in 20 seconds. Strong in midrange acceleration as well, it ran from 30 to 50 mph in 4.7 seconds and from 40 to 60 mph in 6.3 seconds.

Howard made sure drivers, co-pilots and passengers could remain comfortable—at any speed. To this end, the builder padded the gunwales

exceptionally well and covered the sole with posh Berber carpet. The rear bench was reassuringly deep in the cockpit, and the buckets for the driver and co-pilot had removable bottom sections for stand-up running. Angled footrests provided welcome support for our driver and observer when they were seated. Our test team also found the midcabin and open-bow spaces uncommonly comfortable for those of a 28-footer.

The 28 Bullet's almost flat, low-profile deck did not reveal so much as a dimple in its tooling. Its hullsides were equally flawless. Unlike the average West Coast custom boat, where



Clockwise from left: Windscreens for the driver and observer can be adjusted to deflect the wind. Rigging on the 28 Bullet was superior. Notice how the wires for the dual batteries were wrapped in conduit and other wires were bound together with plastic tie-wraps. Howard brought the boat with a Mercury Racing HP525EFI motor. The engine produced some strong midrange numbers, including 30 to 50 mph in a sizzling 4.7 seconds.

five-color gelcoat graphics are considered tame, our test model was dressed in various shades of gray with a pearlescent finish that created remarkable dockside appeal.

Engine compartment rigging was race-quality. It included through-bolted L-angles holding the engine to the stringers, evenly distributed stainless-steel cushion clamps supporting all the conduit-protected wiring and hoses. It also featured color-matched billet aluminum boxes for the batteries.

We'd love to see a sport boat that can challenge the 28 Bullet. But frankly, nothing right now comes close. It's a winner. Again. 🏆

Howard 28 Bullet | Test Results

Centerline	28'
Beam	8'4"
Hull weight	4,500 pounds
Price as tested	\$121,930
Engine	Mercury Racing HP525EFI
Cubic-inch displacement/horsepower	502/500
Propeller	Lab-finished Mercury Bravo One 15 1/4" x 27"
Zero to 15 seconds	64 mph
Top speed at rpm	80 mph at 5300
Contact	661-257-9275, www.howardboats.com

► For the Performance Report on the Howard 28 Bullet, see "Chart Topper," January 2005, Page 88.