



# Howard Custom Boats

## [28 Bullet]

In any given year, the Howard 28 Bullet is a threat to take home our Sport Boat of the Year award. In fact, the stepped single-engine V-bottom has won it three times since it was introduced in 2000. Time to make that a fourth.

Competition fuels excellence, and we would have loved to see another sport boat give Howard's 28-footer a run for its money. But when we totaled up the numbers, nothing was really close. Once again, the 28 Bullet stomped the field.

As in the past, what dazzled us most about the 28 Bullet was its handling. We simply haven't tested a stepped V-bottom that turns any better. Like a European sports car, the 28 Bullet hugged corners and gave you that unmistakable and delightful planted-in-your-seat feeling. When the steering wheel input was intentionally abrupt, the boat responded smoothly.

And the 28 Bullet's straight-line tracking was unrivaled by anything in its class. The way the boat held course at idle speed, you'd think it had twin engines. At high speed, as one of our test drivers said several times, it's on rails.

This time around, high speed turned out to be 89.4 mph. (With a turbocharged engine under the hatch, another 28 Bullet we tested ran more than 100 mph with reassuring stability.) Howard went with stock power, albeit high-quality stock power, with a Mercury Racing HP600SCi for our test boat.

Rivalling the boat's performance was its workmanship. The deck of the 28 Bullet was almost completely flat, and on that kind of surface tiny tooling errors look huge. But we could not find so much as a ripple in the elegant deck. The same


precise mold work was evident in the tooling, and the boat's red and gray eye-catching gelcoat graphics were deftly handled.

Hydraulic hinges raised the hatch, which had a scoop, over the expertly rigged engine compartment. To minimize clutter, the builder included fiberglass fender holders on each side of the engine. The motor was installed with Mercury Racing mounts and L-angles through-bolted to the stringers.

We've tested the 28 Bullet in open-bow and closed-deck configurations, and though the former is more versatile, we prefer the latter—we're performance lovers first and foremost. Our closed-deck model's cabin did have a low ceiling—a trade off we'd gladly make for the stylish flat deck. Still, the space was amply equipped for the breed with facing lounges, a V-berth and a strapped-down cooler.

But the greatest strength of the boat's interior was its elegant cockpit, which was outfitted with Berber carpet, two bolsters and a rear bench. Billet bases for the forward seats served as footrests for the bench passengers. To help passengers hang on in rough water, there were grab handles on the backs of the bolsters. Gunwales were well padded in all the right places.

Howard used only top-flight components at the helm. The assortment included Auto Meter Pro-Comp Marine gauges, an IMCO Marine tilt helm and a Livorsi Marine throttle and shifter.

With the 28 Bullet, Howard continues to serve notice. We hope another builder rises to the challenge. Although it's a tall one, as Howard has proven for the fourth time. 

### TEST RESULTS

**Centerline/beam**  
28'4"/8'4"

**Hull weight/fuel capacity**  
4,800 pounds/85 gallons

**Price as tested**  
\$140,200

**Engine**  
Mercury Racing HP600SCi

**Cubic-inch displacement/hp**  
502/600

**Propeller**  
Lab-finished Mercury Bravo One 15 1/4" x 32"

**Zero to 15 seconds**  
67 mph

**40 to 60 mph**  
5.7 seconds

**Top speed at rpm**  
89.4 mph at 5,400

**Contact**  
661-257-9275, [www.howardboats.com](http://www.howardboats.com)

From left: Mercury Racing's HP600SCi engine fit snugly in the engine compartment. At the helm, the 28 Bullet included a tilt helm from IMCO Marine. Howard installed grab handles on the back of the bolster seats. A V-berth and facing lounges were upholstered in white.

► For the Performance Report on the Howard 28 Bullet, see "Another Gem," January 2007, Page 86.

