

# Howard Custom Boats

## 28 Sport Deck

Things were mighty close in this year's deck-boat category, but—truth be told—they always are. The West Coast custom market takes its deck boats seriously, and for good reason. Nothing, at least out West, sells better. There's market share at stake.

Close as it was when all the scores were tallied, the 28 Sport Deck from Howard Custom Boats was the clear winner. This 100-plus-mph beauty handled precisely, was constructed artfully and offered a bounty of sweet features such as a rearview video system and a 5,000-watt stereo.

Overall, the 28 Sport Deck delivered a knockout performance. When it came to handling, the 28-footer turned as precisely as any boat—catamaran or V-bottom—during the 2008 Performance Trials. With an inward lean, steady carve and a gentle exit through turns, the model wasn't just a blast to drive, it was easy to drive.

And with a 900-horsepower, supercharged fuel-injected engine from Teague Custom Marine providing the power, the 28-footer was plenty fast.

The 28 Sport Deck topped out at 103.7 mph with the engine wound out to 5,700 rpm, and cruised at 79 mph with the big-block running at 4,500 rpm. From a standing start, the boat reached that cruising speed in less than 20 seconds.

But the boat supplied the biggest and swiftest kicks in middle-range acceleration tests. When our test driver nailed the throttle, it ran from 30 to 50 mph in 3.7 seconds, 40 to 60 mph in 4.5 seconds and 40 to 70 mph in 7.4 seconds.

In all aspects, the 28 Sport Deck's workmanship was spectacular. Its flawless tooling and precise gelcoat graphics were protected by a

brushed aluminum rubrail. The builder also used fiberglass covers to dress up the through-bolted L-angles that held the big-block engine to the stringers.

Billet boxes housed the batteries, and evenly spaced cushion clamps supported the wiring. In yet another sweet touch, the oil cooler was powder-painted to match the boat's graphics.

Howard also didn't miss a trick when it came to the 28 Sport Deck's interior amenities. An acrylic gate on the bow of the boat offered foredeck access to the beach or dock when open. And when it was closed, the gate provided some wind protection for passengers on the bow lounges.

Two bucket seats and an L-shape lounge to port made up the cockpit seating. The starboard-side console ahead of the helm had a dinette table inside that could be inserted into a designated receptacle ahead of the L-shape lounge. In the console to port, there was a cooler mounted on a sliding track.

Top-quality features at the helm included a Latham Marine throttle and shifter, Livorsi Marine instruments with carbon-fiber faces and a Garmin GPS unit. Both the driver and co-pilot stations were outfitted with flip-up wind deflectors. From the in-sole lockers to the compartments under the lounges, stowage was aplenty—a must for any deck boat.

That Howard's 28 Sport Deck bested a stellar field of custom deck boats to prevail in this category speaks to the boatbuilder's dedication. Rest assured, the competition will be just as tough next year. Rest equally assured that Howard Custom Boats will be at or near the top of the pack. **P**

### TEST RESULTS

**Centerline/beam**  
28'6"/8'6"

**Hull weight/fuel capacity**  
4,800 pounds/80 gallons

**Price as tested**  
\$177,495

**Engine**  
Teague Custom Marine 900 EFI

**Cubic-inch displacement/hp**  
540/900

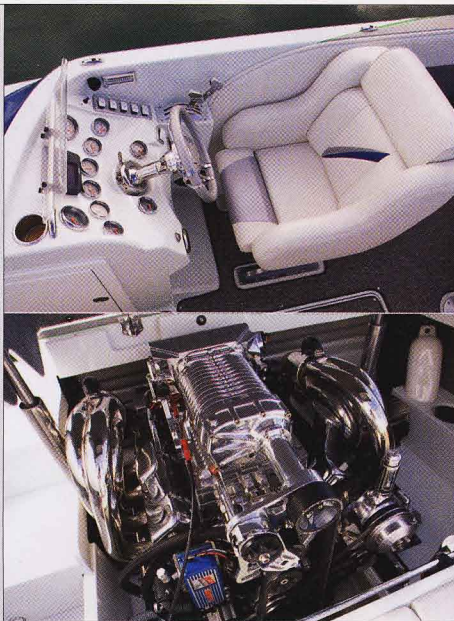
**Propeller**  
Lab-finished Mercury Bravo One 15 1/4" x 36"

**Zero to 20 seconds**  
82 mph

**40 to 60 mph**  
4.5 seconds

**Top speed at rpm**  
103.7 mph at 5,700

**Contact**  
661-257-9275  
www.howardboats.com



Top Left: Ahead of the driver's seat, which was mounted on a billet base, was a tilt helm and a throttle and shifter supplied by Latham Marine. Bottom Left: To power the 28 Sport Deck, Howard enlisted one of Teague Custom Marine's polished, 900-horsepower supercharged engines.

► For the Performance Report on the Howard Custom Boats 28 Sport Deck, see "Rare Form," April 2008, Page 96.



