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March 2000

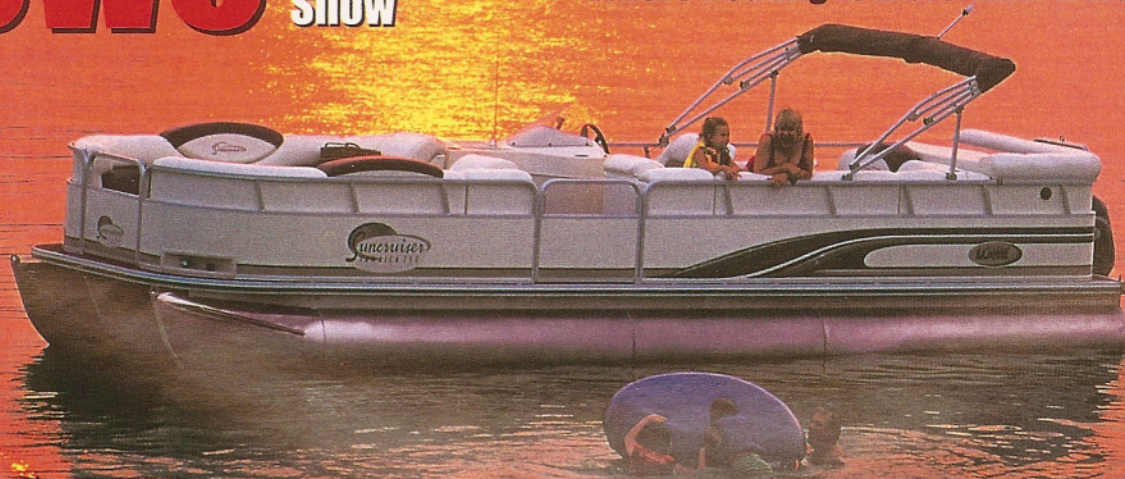
Pontoon & DECK BOAT

The Only Magazine For The World's Best Family Boats

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Three Features on Boating's Bottom Half

Special
This Issue

Shootout 2000 Results

We Test The World's Best Family Boats —

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Accessories

Something's Goofy Here!

Fin-ish Pontoon Blowouts

Almost anyone who has attempted a full turn at top speed in a pontoon has felt the wrath of a blowout. With no grip, there's no trip. It's enough to make a captain cuss.

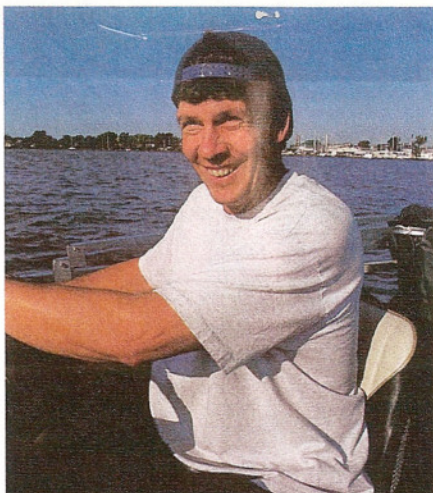
Conrad Marine Inc. wants to keep your language in check with its new patented Technically Advanced Performance (T.A.P.) Fin System, designed to increase your toon's speed and prevent blowouts. It also promises to help re-channel the water, controlling the "negative" force of the spray and converting it to "positive" spray that lifts the boat. Malcolm "Goofy" Sohm, the brains behind the system, insists your boat will "run like a scared rabbit and turn like a Ferrari" with the fins.

Sounds phony? Pontoon & Deck Boat magazine tested the T.A.P. Fin System last fall on a 20-foot Crestliner 280 Sport with a Johnson 60-hp, two-stroke engine and Mercury Marine propellers on Lake Winnebago in Wisconsin. The result? Barely a blowout.

We first tested a Crestliner without the T.A.P. Fin System with two men aboard (average weight 195 pounds), two full tanks of fuel and one foot of chop. The boat maxed out on the sea-saw ride at just over 18 mph at 4,700 rpm, and when we put it in a full turn, plummeted to about 6 mph and blew out.

That wasn't the case in our second ride in a 280 Sport with the fins welded into place. The toon reached a peak speed of 20.4 mph at 5,000 rpm, and better yet, when yanked into a full turn, kept its speed at just over 8 mph and suffered little or no blowout. Scared rabbit or not, when we raced both boats head-to-head, our modified boat easily danced away.

Daniel Phillips' 24-foot HarrisKayot also took a leap of speed with the fins. Another boat riding alongside Phillips' pontoon clocked his craft at 38 mph (thanks in part to his 150-hp Mariner). The



He may be Goofy, but he isn't crazy.

Pennsylvania boater said at first he doubted, but now he is "sold" on the T.A.P. Fin System. "You look at the fins and you think that something that simple couldn't work so well," he said.

Certainly not every pontooner will become Flash Gordon on water with the fins, but they should bump up your velocity a few miles per hour. Don Atkins of Texas bought the system for his '95 Landau Bandit and said his boat "runs higher and better" now and has increased in speed seven to eight miles per hour with his 70-hp engine. "I'm surprised that boat manufacturers haven't jumped on this," he said.

We were also pleased at how our test boat stayed flatter in the turns and bobbed less with the system installed. Marc Oltra of Wisconsin affirms the same result on his fin-furnished HarrisKayot. "It turns on a dime," he said. (As for Sohm's claim, none of us have ever been at the wheel of a Ferrari, unfortunately.)

Two varieties of the system are avail-

able: the Standard Package, which is a set of full-length fins installed on either the inside or the outside of the pontoons, and the SS Package, which features fins installed on both the inside and the outside.

Oltra said buyers need to be aware that the system will create some lift on their pontoon, especially when they install the SS Package, as he did. "Because of the added lift, there's a possibility that you may have to change your propeller's pitch to increase the speed," he said.

Another item of concern is proper installation. A poor job of installation can damage your craft, so seek out a capable welder. Sohm attests that if his fins are welded on with know-how, he doesn't know how you can go wrong. "If my system is installed correctly by a professional, it will not affect any of the original manufacturer's welds or construction," he said. Atkins added that his welder "had never done a fin system and remarked how easy it was to put on."

Will the system change the aesthetics of your boat? Sohm said the difference in looks is negligible. "It blends right in. I've even had a number of people say it looks racy or sporty."

Overall, the larger the craft, the more effective the fins are in helping the boat plane and mastering the turns, so we recommend installing the T.A.P. Fin System on at least a 24-foot pontoon.

Still skeptical? Conrad Marine is so convinced that you will be sold on the T.A.P. Fin System, the company is tossing in a lifetime warranty — all starting at \$900, plus installation. For more information, write in Reader Service No. 94 or contact Conrad Marine Inc. at 6453 South Hwy. 45, Oshkosh, WI 54902; phone: 920-688-3166; fax: 920-688-3139; Internet: www.conradmarine.com.

—S. Springer

2 for 1: The fins not only reduce spray and drag, but they also lift the boat.

