



A MUCH-NEEDED PERFORMANCE LIFT

Testing the next generation of T.A.P. FINS

By Brady L. Kay

When you're about to put pen to paper and finalize the purchase of your new pontoon, the list of options available for those custom ordering can feel a little intimidating. Often buyers prefer to stick to their pre-determined budget or take more amenities above deck rather than opt for performance upgrades such as an aluminum underskin and lifting strakes. For some, the decision not to give performance more of a thought can come back to haunt you but before you rush back to the dealer to talk trade-in value, Conrad Marine has an alternative solution that involves keeping your boat.

Last fall the *PDB* staff stopped into Long Island Marina on Lake Norman in North Carolina to talk with the owner who has found this aftermarket solution to be a good fit for his customers and has been having success with the T.A.P. FIN product from Conrad Marine for over 17 years.

"We sell a lot of the Bentley 220 Navigators because it's a mid-line boat that is a good fit for those looking for an all-around family pontoon," says marina owner Eb Pyle. "From the manufacturer you can add hydraulic steering, an aluminum belly skin and lifting strakes, but here at Long Island Marina we use a lot of the T.A.P. FIN systems and the reason is you don't have to do the aluminum underbellies and the lifting strakes and you

get more performance for your dollar. The FINS handle better, in your turns it doesn't lean out, it runs flat and again you just get more performance out of your boat for the dollar."

TRIPLE THREAT

Years of on-water product testing went into the development of the T.A.P. FINS system from Conrad Marine and the latest design of the popular aftermarket accessory is focused on doing more than just improving your pontoon's performance. With less spray and reduced drag you can take your enjoyment to a whole new level.

Improvements to the latest version were developed specifically to benefit triple pontoon hulls – referred to as the SSG Edition – and are geared towards larger outboard engines on models that typically include bigger fuel tanks and more overall weight compared to pontoons that were built 10 or so years ago.

"A strake can only do so much," says T.A.P. FIN inventor Malcolm Sohm. "This new design improves the turning for a smoother ride, which is what you'd expect in a high-end pontoon. Plus you get a drier back deck with an increase in speed and handling."

VERSATILITY

We first stopped in the Long Island Marina Showroom in Terrell, N.C., to take a look at

MORE INFO

Bentley Pontoons
803-520-5280
www.bentleypontoons.com

Conrad Marine
828-478-9585
www.conradmarine.com

Evinrude
844-345-4277
www.evinrude.com

Long Island Marina
828-241-4877
www.longislandmarina.com

Long Island
Marina Showroom
828-478-4877

Aftermarket 89

Installation 16/20
Function 47/50
Durability 9/10
Design 9/10
Price 8/10

828-478-9585
www.conradmarine.com



At Rest



Underway



a full display of boats this dealer offers before heading to the nearby marina in Catawba to get behind the wheel of a couple of Bentley pontoons.

During our test we reached a top speed of 43 mph on the Bentley Elite 223 Admiral SE powered with an Evinrude 200hp G2 E-TEC and it included a 15-foot center pony tube with 2-inch FINS on both sides of each log as well as on the center tube. On the Bentley 220 Navigator SE with only two pontoons and equipped with FINS, we were still able to reach a top speed of 38 mph with a 150hp Evinrude 150 G2 E-TEC on the back. As far as handling, on both Bentleys we popped up on plane quickly and felt completely in control during our turns.

SAVINGS COMPARISON

According to Pyle, at his marina a set of T.A.P. FINS will cost between \$1,500 to \$1,800, while adding hydraulic steering and an aluminum skin as a manufacturer option will run his customers anywhere between \$3,500 and \$5,000 depending on the boat.

"We've had a lot of success with customers who wanted better performance out of their pontoon after buying it and ended up loving the T.A.P. FINS," says the marina owner. "So that's a direction we like to steer people when they buy a boat from us to help them not only save money, but get more out of their pontoon." ●