



## Fountain 38

# Razorfish

It's all muscle. **By Kevin Falvey**

**P**erforming a back-down test aboard Fountain's 38 Sportfish Cruiser proved three things. The through-hull exhaust tubes extending aft from the transom ease worries about hydro-locking the engines. The down-angled tips inhibit water from running up the exhaust system when trolling downsea or backing on a fish. This feature is especially important for a stern drive-powered boat because its engines are mounted closer to the transom than an inboard's, giving it a shorter exhaust run. I also measured the exhaust riser height above the waterline at 1'3", which inhibits back-flooding even more. Second, those downturned tips exhaust the fumes below the water, which limits back draft. Don't take that to mean that the 315-bhp Yanmar 6LPA-STZP diesels connected to our test boat's MerCruiser Bravo One XZ stern drives are especially smoky. They're not. The third thing backing down proved? The transom door needs a skirt to prevent water from flooding in under it. Fountain says it's on the case.

Come to think of it, there are two other things the back-down test proved: One, that water was evacuated immediately through the large cockpit scuppers, and two, that Fountain is committed to building winning boats. Expect no less when considering a fast, fishy cruiser like the 38 Sportfish Cruiser.

**OBLIQUE ANGLING.** Man the helm and grab the Kiekhaefer race controls. Top speed exceeds 50 mph, and the double-stepped 38 Sportfish Cruiser lopes effortlessly at 40 mph. Bang out some S-turns, trim it out and make it dance, or cut the wheel and lay it on its ear: The 38 Sportfish Cruiser maneuvers with the ease and security of a conventional deep-V. Low-water pickups, external hydraulic steering, and mechanical drive trim indicators all

contribute to your fun. Holeshoot is typical go-fast, requiring negative drive trim and full deployment of the trim tabs to minimize bowrise. Once up, however, I was able to keep the 38 Sportfish Cruiser planing and maneuverable at 11 mph. If the waves grow steep and close together, you'll be thankful for a slow minimum planing speed that will bring you home in comfort and control regardless of how good the ride is in "normal" conditions.

The 38 Sportfish Cruiser is built for performance. Bonded first by an adhesive with rivets providing clamping pressure, the hull and deck are then run through with stainless-steel bolts and rubrail screws before being bonded with several layers of fiberglass. In effect, it's a one-piece structure. This method makes for a rugged boat and eliminates creaks and groans often caused by a hull and deck moving against each other as the boat "works"



Makes chop seem softer than a pat of butter in the summer sun. Top end: 51.0 mph.

when in service. Another construction highlight is the hardtop's pipework, which impressed me. It features lots of cross-bracing without impeding visibility, a handrail ringing the inside and outside perimeter of the top, and massive corner gussets. Bolted and backed to the deck, this half tower is built to provide long service. It's also prewired and incorporates PFD stowage in its underside.



## BOATING

### Certified Test Results

## Fountain 38 Sportfish

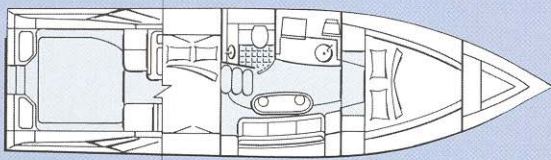


**The Highs** Efficiency gains of a stepped hull without the quirks. All half towers should be built like the one on this boat. Cabin surprisingly accommodating.

**The Lows** You'll bust your knuckles in this boat's engine compartment. Drink cooler needs a drain. The fishing rodholders shouldn't drain into the bilge.

SPEED			EFFICIENCY				OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	naut. gph	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	run angle	sound level
900	4.3	4.9					0	71
1200	5.5	6.3					0	86
1500	6.7	7.7					1	86
1800	7.6	8.7					3	87
2100	7.8	9.0					6	89
2400	8.6	9.9					6	89
2700	12.7	14.6					6	89
3000	28.5	32.8					3	89
3300	33.8	38.9					1	89
3600	40.6	46.7					0	89
3950	44.3	51.0					0	89

Advertised fuel capacity 270 gallons. Range based on 90 percent of that figure. Performance measured with two persons aboard, three-quarters fuel, no water. Sound levels taken at helm, in dB-A.



LOA	37'11"
Beam	10'6"
Draft (max.)	3'2"
Displacement (lbs., approx.)	13,500
Transom deadrise	22°
Bridge clearance	9'0"
Minimum cockpit depth	2'2"
Max. cabin headroom	6'4"
Fuel capacity (gal.)	270
Water capacity (gal.)	50
Price (w/standard power)	\$330,785
Price (w/test power)	\$346,543

**Standard power** Twin 470-hp MerCruiser 500 EFI Bravo One gasoline stern drives.

**Optional power** Twin gasoline stern drives to 940 hp total; twin diesel stern drives or sur-

face drives to 630 bhp total.

**Test boat power** Twin 315-bhp Yanmar 6LPA-STZP/MerCruiser Bravo One XZ in-line-6 diesel stern drives with 254 cid, 3.70" bore x 3.94" stroke, swinging 15½" x 24" four-bladed ss props through 1.5:1 reductions.

**Standard equipment** (major items) Anchor, windlass, rode; 30a battery charger; 30a shorepower; half tower w/full canvas enclosure; water heater; microwave; refrigerator/freezer; standup head w/shower and vacuum-flush commode; TV/VCR; AM/FM/CD stereo w/remote; Kiekhaefer controls w/trim in handle; 2 30-gal. livewells; rigging station w/ice-maker; raw-water washdown w/reserve pump; transom shower.

Systems installation is race ready. Batteries are held down by heavy-duty brackets. The engines are bolted to their beds. Check out the big air-gulping engine intake vents and the heft of the electric-hydraulic ram that opens the hatch. Should the batteries fail, jumper posts allow you to open the hatch anyway. Every metal fitting is bonded, and electrical and plumbing runs are well supported.

But boy, is the engine compartment tight. Try getting at the drive lubricant reservoirs or the starboard engine's oil dipstick. You must step down onto those competition-mounted batteries or lie across the engine. Furthermore, Yanmar engines have about the smallest installation envelope available (one reason they're so popular). Even so,

there's no room under the engine hatch for insulation. The exhaust riser elbow on our test boat was scuffed from contact with the underside of the hatch. Fountain says it's aware of the problem and is working on it.

**RIGHT ANGLER.** Little tweaking is needed in the cockpit. Ringed by coaming pads, the 43-square-foot arena includes two round 30-gallon livewells at the transom, complete with splash-preventing lips and a centerline transom door. Aft the companion lounge is a capacious tackle center, including sink, cutting board, and room below for the standard ice-maker. A pair of lockers conceals battery switches, the genset ignition, breaker for the windlass, and washdown hose. Two rodholders grace each gunwale. These drain to the bilge. Due to the stowage lockers and the inwale-mounted boarding steps, there are no racks below the gunwales, so bungee your gaff to the half tower, and use the rocket launchers for rods. The aft part of the module atop which the helm seat is mounted is your fishbox, big enough for four 50-pound gamesters. A cushion fits its lid, creating a seat, but it snaps to the base—I'd prefer it snapped to the lid. That way, you could open the lid without removing the cushion. Aft of this helm/fishbox is a six-seater L-lounge with stowage below, including a molded-in drink cooler. This needs a drain, lest you enjoy sponging out melt water.

**ANGLE DOWN.** Given its slim, wave-slicing beam and highly raked stem, interior volume is scarce aboard the 38 Sportfish Cruiser. Yet Fountain has made the space weekend-friendly for a couple and reasonably comfortable for four anglers fishing overnight. The forward stateroom is private and features an island berth and cedar-lined locker. The aft cabin sleeps a pair of men, with lying-down headroom only. The head includes a sink and vanity and is roomy enough to take a comfortable shower. I liked the amount of light, both natural and electric, at the faux-granite galley counter. The sink is deep, and the use of shelving within the cabinets provided plenty of dry-goods stowage. Three can sit and eat at the salon settee and removable table. The sole is nonslip with carpet attached by Velcro; the paneling is light cherry; and the headliner is taut, wrinkle-free vinyl.

A well-executed cabin, B-plus fishing amenities, and stern drive-powered high performance combine to put the 38 Sportfish Cruiser in a class by itself. Donzi is introducing a 38ZF later this year, the preliminaries of which indicate that it may have similar features. Pricing has yet to be released. Until then, compare the 38 Sportfish Cruiser to Sea Ray's 340 Amberjack (\$209,000 with twin 370-hp MerCruiser inboards), which doesn't provide the acceleration or high cruising and top speeds of the Fountain. But it does offer similar fishability and terrific cruising accommodations. ⚓

**For More Information** Fountain Powerboats, Dept. B, Drawer 457, Washington, NC 27889, 252/975-2000, [www.fountainpowerboats.com](http://www.fountainpowerboats.com).

#### EXTRA POINT

**At 3600 rpm—46.7 mph—vibration was excessive. However, when I went faster or slower, the vibration, which I attribute to harmonics generated by the test engines turning the test props through the test gear ratio, disappears.**