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TEST REPORT:
REGULATOR 26fs

FAST FISHING, FAST FUN

The new 50-mph Regulator 26 FS has a solid hull, a soft ride and a layout that makes it great for fishing or cruising.

By PETER WRIGHT

There are boats that I review because it's part of my job, and there are boats that I truly look forward to getting the chance to go out on—either because of the boats themselves or because of the people who build them. Regulators fall into the latter category on both counts. Joan and Owen Maxwell of Regulator Marine are young, enthusiastic boat builders with a successful company that is producing a top-notch product, and they're right at the top of my "must visit" list.

Whenever I get the chance to go to the scenic and historic town of Edenton, N. C., to drive a Regulator, I jump at it. My most recent visit was to check out the new 26-foot center con-





sole FS (for Forward Seating). I had heard that the striped bass ("rockfish" in North Carolina) were "snapping like mad dogs" in Albemarle Sound, and a day of fishing is my favorite way to inspect a new boat.

But I came into town under squally skies and in a stiff breeze. My hopes for fishing faded fast and I wondered if I'd even get to take a boat ride.

Clean, well-lit and well-ventilated factories and tidy offices, all of which were in evidence at Regulator, are good clues to conscientious quality control. As she showed me through the modern, and soon-to-be-expanded, plant, Joan Maxwell explained that the company is named after a group of western Carolina citizens who marched on the then capital of New Bern and demanded a say in the government's taxation policies.

"The Regulators stood up for what they believed in," said Joan, "and they

demand value for what they paid for. We thought our company should reflect those values. We want to be a standard by which others are judged."

I had driven a stern-drive version of the Regulator 26 hull at the Miami Boat Show and had been impressed by Joan's description of something she called "the grillage." I asked her to refresh my memory. "It's a word Lou Codega, our naval architect, uses to describe our one-piece, full-fiberglass stringer system, which incorporates all internal longitudinal and lateral structural components into a single molded part. There is no wood anywhere, and the grillage gives us smooth, easy-to-keep-clean, 'finished' surfaces in all our fish boxes and storage areas," she explained. "The one-piece stringer system also makes our boats incredibly strong and stiff."

Starting from the Cook Composites ISO/NPG gelcoat (which can be any color an owner requests—there was even

a boat on the production line sporting Clemson University colors), quality is paramount at Regulator. "Trevira Stoprint" is laid in isophthalic resin between two layers of mat to prevent print-through, from the underlying stitched, multi-axial fiberglass cloth, from marring the outer perfection of the hull.

When a Regulator's hull, grillage, and inner liner are assembled and bonded together with epoxy putty, the result is an exceptionally strong and rigid boat. "We're not too concerned about weight," Owen Maxwell told me. "We use chopped strand glass and resin to increase bulk, which in turn increases rigidity, and the extra weight helps improve our ride in rough water. We can hang enough engine to be able to run 55 or 60 miles an hour, so hull weight isn't a big factor; and we get a strong, stiff boat famous for its ride."



FISHING-FRIENDLY: In addition to rod storage in the fish box, this new 26 has ample tackle and storage compartments in the leaning post.



The wind was still whipping the trees and the brown water of Albermarle Sound, but the rain had let up, so we went for a boat ride after all, on the sound's shallow waters, which are known for their short, nasty chop. The ride was remarkably easy, even dead into the seas, and the boat just felt solid. When a quartering sea did finally put some spray on the Regulator's unique enclosure hanging from the T-top, it was cause for comment. Many boats claim to have a dry ride. Regulator really does.

We had a pleasant tour along Edenton's waterfront, past the old courthouse and the Civil War-era cannons—which never saw action after the barge on which they were moored (awaiting a delayed payment by the Federal Government) was sunk. Drifting and chatting in front of town, we sat comfortably in the trough. With one engine in gear we held almost dead in the water, heading up into the brisk wind. These quiet, low-idling, fuel-injected Yamaha 225s would be great for cast-fishing.

Then Maxwell pushed the throttles down, and the boat jumped onto plane and ran toward home. Although the boat was loaded fully, it topped out at over 50 mph. That's with five people aboard! An economical cruising speed was around 3500 rpm, which gave us 37 mph, using 17.6 gph.

Fishing machine

Conceived of as a dedicated fishing machine, the original Regulator 26 was designed by Lou Codega to meet Owen Maxwell's stringent criteria. He wanted a 26-foot, deep-V hull, with big fish boxes and a center console, that would run 50 miles an hour with outboard power. Years of experience with the Combatant Craft Department of

the U.S. Navy had given Lou the necessary skills to come up with exactly what Owen had in mind. Both the center console, and later the express model, of the Regulator were well received and have become extremely popular with the hard-core fishing fraternity.

Although explicitly designed for fishing, the boats are so seaworthy and have such a reputation for quality that a northeastern dealer requested a modification—the addition of cushioned seats along the hull sides and across the farthest forward bulkhead. The new layout was expensive, but practical and attractive. It allowed a fisherman with a family to use his fishing machine as a family cruiser and fun boat. The modified version soon won fans. The Maxwells, always attuned to their market, took note and built the molds that made the modification standard:

Says Owen, "We like to do as much as possible at the factory, including engine rigging and installation. It's easier for us to maintain quality control and keep things uniform. We can deliver a boat and know it's right. No one has to cut or drill holes and all the wires and cables are bundled and tie-wrapped."

Between the new seats and beneath the deck is a huge fish box with built-in rod storage and a locking Perko D-ring hatch lift. It's large enough to hold all the seat cushions while fishing. Under each seat is a large fish/storage box with an overboard drain.

I really like the new "cruiser" layout—even for the most serious fishing. An angler can stand on the seats to cast or look for fish and also stand down in complete security to fight fish in rough weather.

The well-designed center console houses a compartment with 5'10"

headroom. It affords space for a marine toilet and for storing gear; it also allows access to the electronics and electrical wiring. All surfaces are neat, clean and well finished.

It's easy to tell that Joan and Owen Maxwell both love to fish. It's reflected in the fishing-friendly layout of their boats. I appreciated the big cleats and covering board-mounted hawse holes—big-boat features on a small boat. The cockpit has an in-deck live well and the adjacent lazarette is so well-finished that there is even a clear plastic splash guard over the bait-well pump and macerator to protect them from washdown overspray.

Built into the transom to port and starboard are battery and electrical switch access lockers with bait boxes above them. The fish box molded into the center of the transom could easily be converted to an additional bait well (only a real fish hog would need more fish-box space than the three forward boxes provide).

The Regulator 26 SF is my idea of an ideal offshore center console for both fishing and family fun. The hull, the layout, the quality and the performance are all outstanding. ♪

Regulator 26 FS

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|---|-----------------------|
| LOA | 25'10" |
| Beam | 8'6" |
| Draft (engines down) | 2'7" |
| Weight (w/o engines) | 5,400 lbs. |
| Deadrise | 24 degrees |
| Water | 19 gals. |
| Fuel | 176 gals. |
| Power | (2) 225-hp Yamaha OBs |
| Price (w/engines) | \$79,150 |
| Regulator Marine Inc., Dept. MB&S, P.O. Box 49, Edenton, NC 27932. (252) 482-3837. Fax: (252) 482-5577. | |