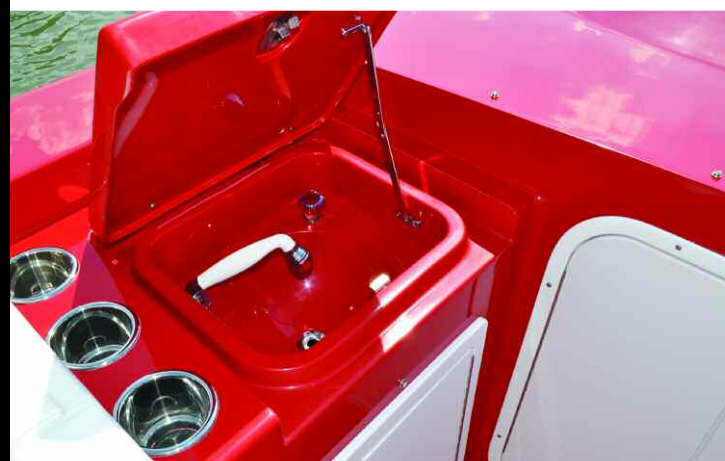


**35'** **DONZI ZR**  
**HAPPY**  
**BOAT**

Story by Chip Fendt

**E**very industry has legendary companies and leaders. In this case I had the privilege to revisit both. This cool December morning in Sarasota FL, I caught up with my friend and long time industry leader Craig Barrie, VP Donzi Marine and behind him was the newly designed 35 ZR Open. Craig, having lead companies such as Cigarette Racing Team for nearly 15 years, Hawk Marine Power and Dragon Power Boats is now steering Donzi Marine in a new direction. His Offshore and Formula 1 World and National Championships has earned him the respect to drive home a new generation of high performance boating and its current course. Due to economic times Donzi felt it was time to look at the industry from a different prospective. To myself, I see it as survival of the fittest in these difficult times. I now would like to introduce you to the Donzi ZR OPEN!

PHOTOS BY JOSH STICKELS



A wash basin and cup holders on the starboard bow section are standard equipment.



Craig Barrie shows the instrumentation to Chip Fendt before testing the boat.



The 35' Donzi ZR ready for its test.

Donzi and Craig felt that it was time to incorporate the racing heritage and its style with a hybrid Sport Utility Vessel (SUV). Making note of the different types of boats being used on the lakes and waterways while attending many pokers runs over past seasons the idea for the 35 open was conceived. Donzi needed to cater more to the family and not just the day racer that lies in many of us. The boat had to accommodate more of the family but still maintain the raciness that makes the blood flow. The deck was given the apparent west coast influenced open bow treatment. Two opposing lounge seats with ergonomically correct forward looking back rests make for a comfortable place to ride. Directly behind the seats is a small hatch that when lifted reveals a color matched sink and drink holders with day storage below. Under the opposite hatch was an additional sink with a 12 volt refrigerator below. A well placed waterproof stereo remote is mounted on the starboard side wall.

One really cool feature is the forward mounted anchor locker. It is in the same location but access to it is much more user friendly that climbing over the windshield and out on to the forward deck doing the balancing act dance. Donzi decided it was time to make use of the forward area of the ZR Open in lieu of a cabin that is utilized a fraction of the boaters day spent on the water.

The race style influenced cockpit has seating for 5 passengers. Two forward electric drop down bolsters and a 3 person lounge style bench seat in the rear. The craftsmanship and pizzazz is what you would expect from Donzi. The helm has complete compliment Livorsi gauges including a GPS Speedo are mounted directly in line of sight. What is new for many HP enthusiasts is the new Mercury Smart Craft Monitor. It does everything! Monitors and displays all gauges, GPS speed with interface, fuel management, fuel water and waste levels, dual engine sync display, system diagnostic's and much more. This Smart Craft system will actually put the boat into a safe guardian mode when unnoticed problems occur. Why then put the gauges in you ask, because past generations are still used to the dial faces and the cool factor. Give it a few more years and they will be replaced by smart screens.

Access to the bow area from the cockpit is a snap. Slide back the recessing cabin door step down and pass through



**Randy & Kim Sweers of Fastboats.com check out the new Donzi 35 ZR, with one of the new owners of Donzi, Bill Gates.**

the 60 inches of headroom and out into the forward area. On your way through one will notice an enclosed port side head and on the opposite side a full size cooler neatly stowed in place. There are two opposing seats forward in the mid-ship cabin which I would personally turn them into additional storage areas.

The stern section of the 35 ZR Open has been extremely well thought out. A padded sun lounge with the Donzi logo meticulously stitched in place is outstanding but to me what I really appreciate the is accessibility. The integral fiberglass platform that is extended by a custom aluminum color matched swim platform was the icing on the cake! When stepping onto the rear this platform configuration offers secure footing and the fear factor of slipping off a running boat has been addressed. A swim ladder was neatly stowed underneath and it is very user friendly even when disembarking the boat while on a trailer.

Under the hatches the 35 ZR Open was powered by a pair of Mercruiser 8.2 Mag HO rated at 430 HP each. These EFI engines require 87 octane which is readily available at all marinas. Another unique feature this package has is the catalytic converter and muffler system built in. No need for a switchable mufflers and exceeds all decidable laws in most all states. Did I mention a transferable 5-year warranty which translates into better resale? All rigging in the engine compartment was what you would expect from Donzi. Everything was through stainless bolted, Adel clamped and Tie wrapped securely in place. Elec-

tronic battery and key switches with a set of jumper terminal's were located under the rear seat adjacent the carbon fiber breaker panel. On the transom the Bravo One drives were mounted on a user friendly X dimension. The ZR was equipped 1.50 gear ratio coupled to 30 pitch Bravo One 4 blade propellers. Hydraulic power steering was provided by Latham and the boats attitude was adjusted by Mercury Racing 280 SS trim tabs.

After inspecting the ZR on the ramp Craig and I climbed aboard and headed out on to a brisk 39 degree sunny morning for a test drive. Pushing the throttles forward with the tabs slightly negative the hull slipped on plane with no loss of the horizon. Always an important safety feature in any boat. Conditions were light so we just cruised around the bay the same as a one would on a bright summer day. I envisioned a family enjoying themselves, some of the kids lounging in the bow area, Mom next to Dad in the cockpit bolsters listening to the sirus stereo with plenty of room to spare. The ZR was such a "Happy Boat" and was carving predictable turns on the bay effortlessly. We then stopped and Craig and I spoke about the past and the future. While idling we had comfortable conversation due to the muffler system. This bow rider style was making sense to me now. There was more room in this mid size than much larger sport boats. More storage for sundries than her sister the Standard ZR and a great bang for the dollar spent. Please make note that the bow area should never be occupied in any boat while operating at high speed and

adverse conditions.

I brought the ZR Open back on plane and brought it up to 4000 rpm which resulted in a comfortable cruise speed 61.6 mph. Then 4500 rpm 72.3 mph and one will definite notice how well the Plexiglass wind deflector was working when the wind chill factor was apparent. Pushing the throttles forward to WOT at 5000 rpm's that GPS read 82.1 mph. With Craig

in the boat I wanted to see just how hard the ZR Open would turn. I put the boat in a hard left hander at 70 mph and continued pushing the throttles forward while tightening my turn. I glance over at Craig and he looked bored so I pushed the twin stepped hull even harder. Something a professional racer would only do and the hull smiled back and responded incredibly. While at speed I snapped the steering wheel in the opposite direction and the bow changed direction as it was on rails. When I asked why the boat handled so well, Craig responded it was all in changes he made to the center of gravity. He said the magic number was 117 inches.

In conclusion we are all seeing a generational shift in many facets of life and the Team at Donzi Marine is adjusting with new versions and adaptations of existing models. This is clearly seen in the new Hybrid 35 ZR Open. It has a racy look and feel, it handles and performs like a race boat and has the amenities and features one would find in a deck boat. As we got back to the dock and I was asked what my initial thoughts were, all I could say this is one "HAPPY BOAT". Rumor has it that Craig



**SPECIFICATIONS**

**35' ZR Donzi**

LOA	35' 3"
BEAM	8'6"
DRAFT	34"
DEAD RISE	Variable
FUEL CAP	170 Gallons
WEIGHT	8500 lbs
MAX HP	1200HP
HEADROOM	60"
FRESH WATER	10 gal
ENGINE OPTIONS (Mercruiser)	HP
T-8.2 MAG HO Bravo I	435HP
T-525 EFI Bravo I	525 HP
Price:	\$291,692.00 retail
	\$298,333.00 retail as tested

**For more information contact**

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