

Whaler 230 Dauntless

BY DEAN TRAVIS CLARKE

HEAD OUT AT SUNRISE FOR SOME INLET FISHING. COME BACK, pick up your family and run them across the bay to a waterfront restaurant for lunch. Wait an hour after eating like your grandmother insisted; then, shred some wakeboarding moves on the way home. That's the kind of lifestyle Whaler had in mind when it introduced the new 23 Dauntless as the replacement for the old 22. I rather like that lifestyle.

PERFORMANCE

For a 23-footer, this Dauntless has excellent helm ergonomics. And a moderate 16-degree deadrise combined with a sharp entry makes for good shallow-water

capability without sacrificing the ability to negotiate a substantial chop.

It took just over three seconds to plane, and I must comment on the incredible throttle response of this boat with the

225 hp Mercury Verado. You get instant reaction to any throttle setting with particularly impressive mid-range.

Heading out Ponce de Leon's infamous inlet on the central Florida coast, we met 4- to 5-foot, wind-against-tide seas with hardly any space at all between them. Prudence dictated that I slow down so as not to throw my passengers out of the boat. At about 15 mph, we didn't pound, had perfect control and honestly took nary a drop of spray aboard — a most impressive ride. Turning beam-to these hefty rollers as I drifted looking for bait pods proved that I could still stand comfortably without needing to hold on, thanks to a gentle and totally predictable roll motion.

In the calmer water outside the jetties, the 230 Dauntless ran up to a top speed of 49.2 mph at 6,150 rpm and burning 23 gph. The 225 Verado rates at 6,400 rpm. Though you might change the 14½- by 17-inch prop and get a mile or two more top-end, you'd be sacrificing that awesome mid-range response — not a fair trade in my book.



Cruising at 5,000 rpm supplied a solid 35 mph at 16.7 gph. The 230 lists max power as a 250 hp Verado. Engineering tests show that package provides a 51.9 mph top speed burning 27 gph and 37 mph at 5,000



rpm while using 17 gph. Enough benefit to warrant the added cost? That's your call.

I liked the response to radical maneuvers: speed bleed and just enough stern-slide to keep everyone aboard safe and happy. By the way, tabs are optional but should be standard.

FISHING

Static draft is only 12 inches. However, on plane the 230 Dauntless will run shallower, and the transom design easily accommodates a jack plate as well as a Power-Pole. Whaler provides a plug in the anchor locker for a bow-mounted trolling motor. An optional pedestal seat for the bow or stern stows in a special rack in the console when not in use.

The 230 boasts a huge foredeck without cushions for casting and with cushions (standard) for relaxing.

Our test boat sported a second, optional livewell with two more rod holders in the leaning post. Standard equipment places a slide-out cooler there.

Vertical rod holders on the console front allow the foredeck angler to swap out weapons without leaving the casting platform. I found the healthy toerail around this deck did a masterful job of keeping a fly line contained. Because of the way Whaler builds its boats, it's hard to put rod holders in the gunwales. In lieu of that, Whaler mounts two standard holders in the aft deck along the transom. Our boat also sported two optional ones there (part of the fishing package).

Each livewell has its own dedicated pump. The raw-water washdown also has a separate pump with higher pressure to make washing decks easier, and all are premium-quality Shurflos with mag drive. Standard equipment list includes a full-height bow rail, but anglers will certainly want the low-profile rail instead.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

A dedicated anchor locker with wide deck access and a notch through which the rode can pass makes a nice improvement, though I'd line it with some rubber sheeting so that the anchor doesn't chew up the nice gelcoat finish in there.

I consider the single most innovative feature to be the fold-up seatback on the foredeck. A very simple mechanism lets you quickly and easily raise and lower it. It's a great feature for family cruising or especially slow fishing days.

Fit an 8-inch electronic-display on the left side of the helm console and a 10- or

perhaps 12-inch to starboard of the centerline engine gauges. An MP3 player input hides inside the catch-all tray at knee level. The console also stores an optional bow table in a dedicated rack. Whaler engineers fiberglass knees into the bilge at the transom, which add so much strength that they completely prevent any stress cracks or transom failures.

The all-activity tower — an option that looks like a poling platform — also acts as a towing stanchion and provides racks for wakeboards and the like. Honestly, don't even consider poling this skiff.

And, of course, like all Boston Whalers, the 230 Dauntless is unsinkable. The deck and hull molds lock together; then, the spaces all get injected with foam under pressure, making every Whaler a one-piece boat for all intents and purposes.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	23 ft. 6 in.
BEAM	18 ft. 6 in.
HULL DRAFT	1 ft.
DEADRISE	16 deg.
WEIGHT	2,900 lb. (dry, w/o power)
FUEL	90 gal.
MAX HP	250 hp OB
MSRP	\$68,396 (w/225 Verado)

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MERCURY 225 HP VERADO FOUR-STROKE

TYPE	6-IL
DISPL.	158.5 cid
MAX RPM	6,400
HP/LB RATIO	0.35
FUEL SYSTEM	SC-EFI
GEAR RATIO	1.85:1
WEIGHT	505 lb.
ALT. OUTPUT	70 amps
MSRP	\$17,920

NOTABLE STANDARD EQUIPMENT

- Stern seat w/folding backrest
- Six console-mounted rod holders
- Reversible helm seatback
- Lockable rod storage
- Insulated livewell
- Reclining seatbacks on foredeck

IMPRESSIONS

The 230 Dauntless has so many great innovations and runs so well that it may quickly become one of Whaler's best sellers.

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