Larry Kean

Twin SeaCraft Tsunami 23-footers, one outboard-powered and the other fitted with sterndrives, race across Florida's Biscayne B

THE SEACRAFT 23′ TSUNAMI

SeaCraft's exciting fiberglass day cruiser offers excellent performance in both sterndrive and outboard versions.

BY LARRY KEAN AND DICK RATH

TODAY, if one is to believe the accounts of some super sales organizations, there is a trend in this country toward boat sales techniques that closely approximate automobile sales techniques. In many companies, it's true, boatbuilding has moved toward Detroit-like assembly line operations, and, in many cases, this has had the effect of reducing the cost and even improving the quality of certain basic, usually rather small, boats.

But the modern, automotive-style, boat sales organization tends to destroy the normal salesman/customer relationship. A man walks into the "showroom" with a vague or perhaps not-so-vague idea of buying a boat, usually a trailerable boat. He's immediately confronted with a well-laid-out room full of shiny fiberglass merchandise and a personality-plus salesman who has been well-programmed to extract the last buck from the customer for this shiny fiberglass merchandise. When the salesman has done his number on the customer, he turns him over to the "closer," an efficient character who checks credit, arranges the financing, fills out the forms, and does whatever else is necessary to complete the deal.

Such operations are often very successful. The salesman may or may not be a boatman, the closer probably is not, and the merchandise—the boats—may be good or bad, depending on what kind of a deal the retail organization has been able to work out with which boatbuilders—or, as many of them consider themselves, *manufacturers*.

Such a sales philosophy leads inevitably to one thing—price competition. And when price competition takes over, the "big sale" becomes more important than the quality of the boat. And the first-boat buyer—or even, surprisingly, the experienced boatman who gets tangled up with this kind of merchandising may well wind up with a sour taste in his mouth for the whole sport.

If these people are right—if this kind of merchandising takes over the boating business the way it has the automotive industry—you may be unable, someday, to buy a boat such as the SeaCraft Tsunami 23.

A good way to describe the Tsunami is to point out what she isn't. She isn't a copy of some other company's hot-selling runabout. She isn't cheap. She isn't designed solely for her glitter under the overhead lights of the showroom. In fact, Bill Potter is on record as believing a boat should have a good nonslip surface every place a boatman might put his foot, and this boat has. Obviously, her builders think of her as a boat, not a "product."

We first saw her at the Chicago trade show. A brand-new model from a company with a reputation for producing quality boats. SeaCraft President Bill Potter explained the name: "*Tsunami* is a Japanese word meaning 'big wave.' It's pronounced 'Soo-nah-mee,' but if you want to say it properly you

SPECIFICATIONS

Dimensions:

Overall length	23′ 3″	Freeboard forward	3′ 5″
Waterline length	19′ 0″	Freeboard aft	2′ 5½″
Beam	8′ 0″	Bridge clearance*	6′ 11″
Draft	17″ (hull)	Cabin headroom	4′ 1½″

**Waterline to top of masthead light.*

Hull Form: True deep-V with four running strakes and 20° deadrise at transom.

Hull Weight: 2650 lbs less engine(s). Safe load capacity 1600 lbs for passengers and gear.

Accommodations: Cuddy cabin with V-berth, space for optional head, twin pedestal-style helm and companion seats.

Standard Equipment: Complete International Rule navigation lights; Coast Guard recommended engine and fuel tank compartment ventilation; bilge blower; deck hardware includes two 8″ bow cleats, two 8″ stern cleats, two rope fairleads on stern quarters, all hardware through-bolted Marinium; aluminum-framed safety glass windshield with hinged Plexiglas center panel and side wings; bronze-tinted Plexiglas cabin hatch; 12v cabin lamp; nylon-carpeted cabin overhead; lined stowage bin under bunks; two teak-trimmed shelves in cabin; 3-piece bunk cushions; chain locker forward; glove compartment; twin insulated ice chests with overboard drains in after deck; teak combination cockpit shelves and rod racks; mechanical steering, teak-grained switch and instrument panels; self-bailing cockpit aft of step-down box; s.s. bow eye; twin s.s. stern eyes; nonslip walking areas throughout.

Construction: Unitized construction consisting of a number of fiberglass modules—hull, twin longitudinal stringers, hull liner, and deck structure. All units are hand lay-up of mat and woven roving. Five-ply basic hull lay-up, average thickness .196″ (¾-oz mat, 1½-oz mat, 22-oz roving, 1½-oz mat, 22-oz roving. Glass stringers taped in place with two plies each of 1½-oz mat and two of 22-oz roving. Taping carried over bottom for average finished thickness of .366″. Five-ply hull topsides, average thickness .215″ (¾-oz mat, three plies of 1½-oz mat, 22-oz roving). Topside and bottom lay-ups lapped along chine. Eight-ply deck, including ⅜″ end-grain balsa core, average thickness .675″ (¾-oz mat, two 1½-oz mats, 22-oz roving, 1½-oz mat, balsa core, 1½-oz mat, 22-oz roving).

Propulsion and Performance: See chart.

Price: Outboard version with above equipment less engines, $5190, FOB plant. Sterndrive model with above equipment plus instrumentation, bilge pump, and other safety features, $8290, FOB plant. Test outboard model with twin 150 hp Mercury outboard and a number of options had a retail value of $11,800, FOB plant. Sterndrive version with twin 165 hp MerCruisers and a number of extras had a retail value of $13,063, FOB plant.

Designer: SeaCraft, Inc.

Builder: SeaCraft, Inc., 24400 S.W. 137 Ave., Princeton, Fla. 33171

Photographs by Larry Kean

Despite differences in power plants and total horsepower, top speeds are very close. The sterndrive, foreground, wound up to 45.8 mph, while the outboard clocked in with a shade faster 46 mph.

SEACRAFT 23 *continued*

sort of stumble over the 'S.' "

We practiced stumbling over the 'S' for a moment, and arranged to test the Tsunami in both outboard and sterndrive versions.

When the time came, we picked up the two boats—one with twin 150 hp Mercury outboards, the other with twin 165 hp MerCruiser sterndrives—at Miami's Dinner Key Marina. Both were bright red, with matching upholstery, but the sterndrive model had a pair of pedestal seats and a cushioned engine cover, while the outboard had a single helmsman's pedestal seat with an optional insulated, cushioned bench to port.

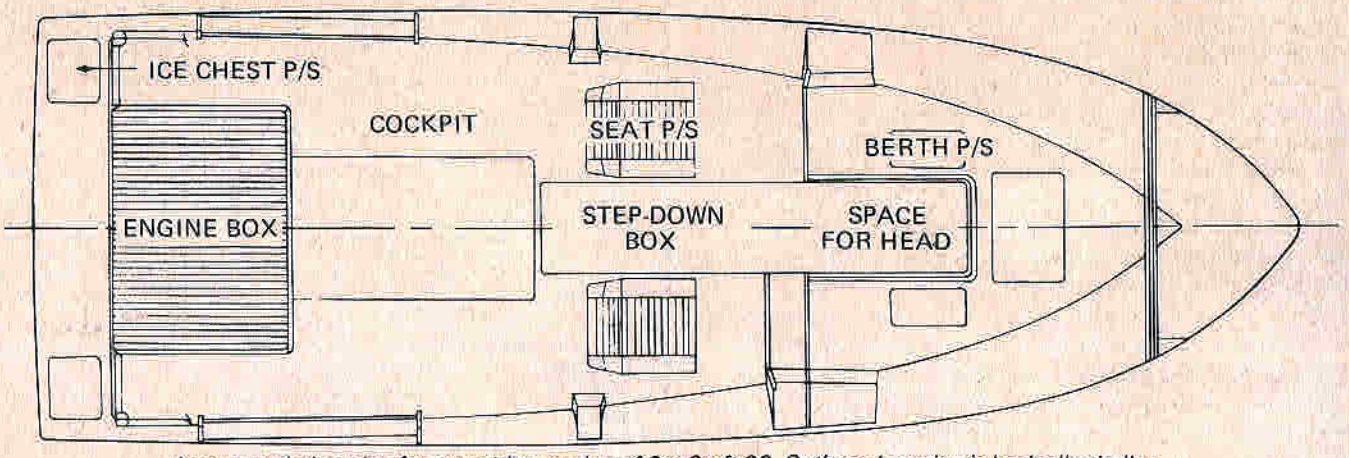
The differences didn't end there: The outboard model was somewhat faster, we found, than the sterndrive, and the sterndrive, equipped with Mercury's "Ride Guide" power steering was notably easier to steer, once we became accustomed to its extremely sensitive response.

Both boats proved to be very soft-riding, and dry. SeaCraft has retained the Moesly-patented deep-V hull, with minor changes in the spray rails, with the result that the boats are extremely dry, even in rough going, and even softer-riding than the earlier SeaCraft hulls, which are themselves excellent deep-V boats.

Running the measured nautical mile in Miami's Government Cut with two boats took a lot of time, but gave us a chance to learn a lot about the boats. Both banked rather sharply in turns, but the outboard's outside engine cavitated noticeably in very tight turns, while the sterndrive seemed less prone to this kind of behavior. The outboard version proved faster, but the sterndrive was somewhat quicker to get up on plane. Both boats have their instrumentation up high in a molded console behind the windshield and on top of the cabin—SeaCraft wants the helmsman to be able to flick his eyes from the water ahead to the instruments and back without having to refocus on gauges somewhere down around his knees. We found this works very well—it's possible to read the oil pressure and water temperature gauges (on the sterndrive) without ever really taking one's eyes off the course ahead, and checking the tachometers requires only a momentary refocusing.

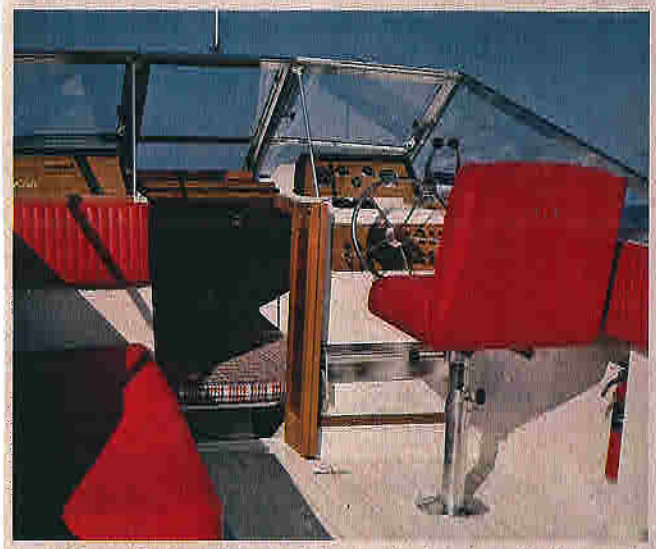
Both outboard and sterndrive boats are extremely sensitive to trim—and both are equipped with power trim. With the engines or drive units tucked right in, the boats get up on plane quickly, and maintain a remarkably level running angle in the process. But once they're up there, kicking the engines or drive units out almost to the point of cavitation will produce considerably more speed at any throttle setting.

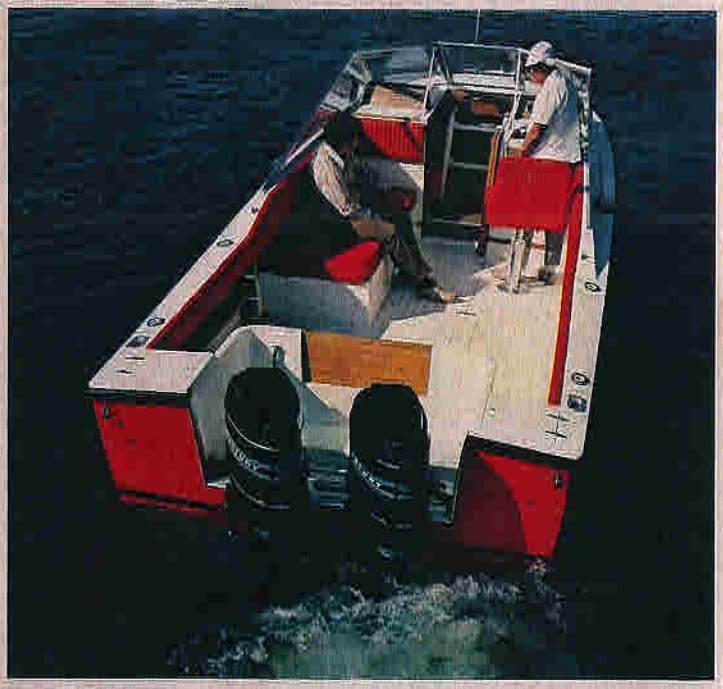
Both outboard and sterndrive boats had propellers turning in the same direction. On the outboard, which did not have power steering, this produced noticeable but not really objectionable, torque in the wheel. The sterndrive, with its power Ride Guide steering, was in fact quite effortless to steer, though it took a bit of getting used to—it was almost too effortless. The slightest change on the wheel will produce an



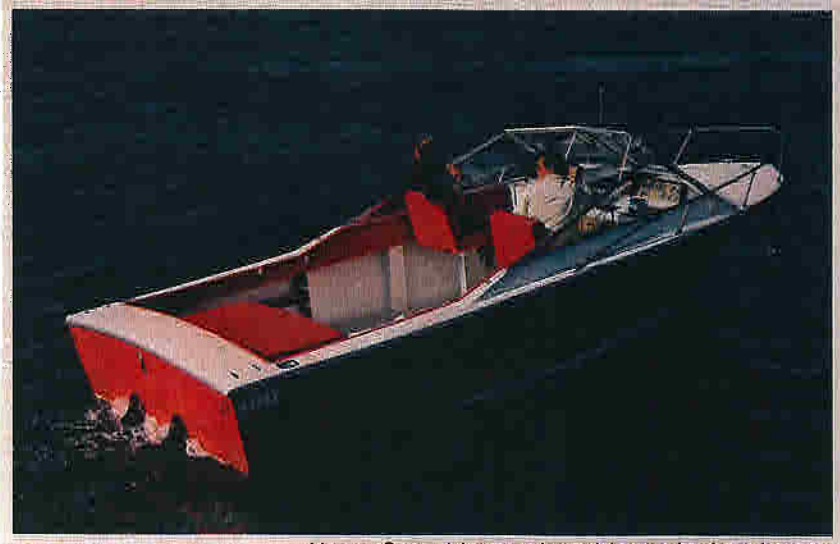
Accommodation plan for sterndrive version of SeaCraft 23. Outboard version is basically similar.

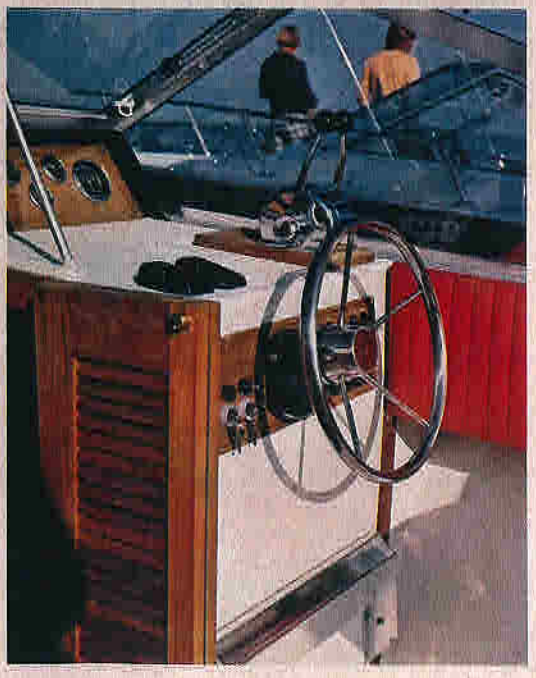
Left: Transom configuration marks the basic difference between the boats. Below: Mayfair Products folding, floating ladder doubles as cockpit ladder and access steps to nonslip foredeck through opening center panel of windshield.





Above: Outboard boat with standard pedestal helmsman's seat and optional lounge-and-ice chest combination ($350). Cuddy cabin encloses V-berths and space for optional head. Right: Full-depth self-bailing motor well is fitted with teakwood gate for access to engines.





Above: Sterndrive version with standard equipment pedestal seats and optional bow rail ($195). Right: Outboard version's neatly arranged helm station with well-placed instrument console and standard equipment s.s. wheel and folding footrest.

alteration in course with practically no muscle involved. It's very good once you're accustomed to it, but most helmsmen will probably tend to oversteer at first. With Government Cut's floating palm fronds, trash, and debris, this super-sensitive steering proved to be a boon. We found we could swerve to avoid a floating object even if we didn't see it until it was almost under the bow.

One of the most interesting features of a comparative test of a given hull with two different kinds of propulsion—fuel consumption—eluded us this time. We hooked up our Brooks Instrument flowmeter to the sterndrive engine, between the fuel pump and carburetor, as recommended by Brooks. Our fuel readings were precise, and logical. But when we came to hook the flowmeter to the big 150 hp Mercury outboard, we found two fuel pumps feeding three carburetors through a puzzlement of Y-fittings and tubing. There was no way to insinuate our meter between fuel pump and carburetor, or fuel pumps and carburetors, so we flew in the face of

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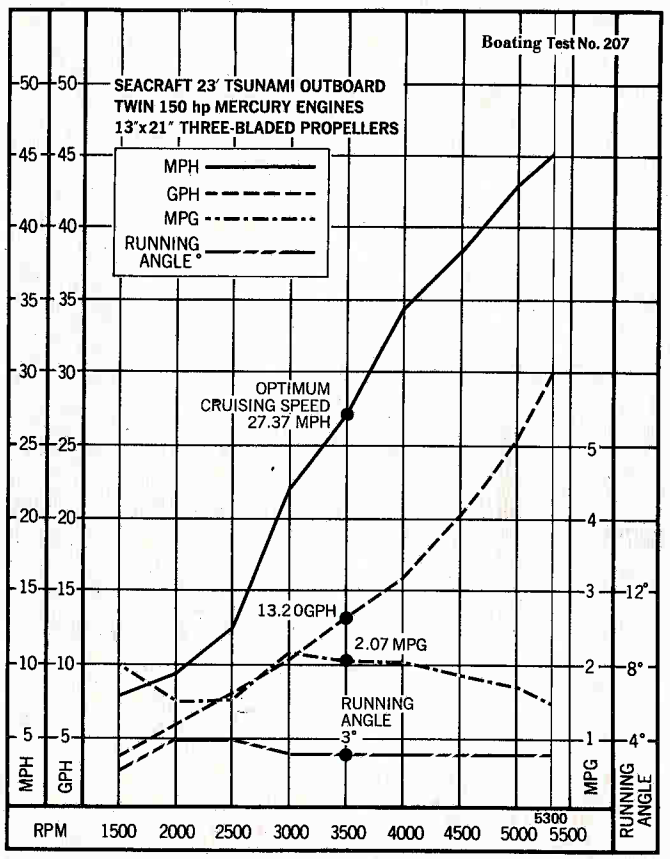
PROPULSION and PERFORMANCE

Outboard Test Boat Power Plant: Twin 150 hp Mercury 6-cyl, 2-cycle, outboard motors with 99.8 cu in piston displacement; electric starting; and power trim.

Optional Power: Outboard motors, single or twin up to a total of 300 hp.

Performance Curves*



RPM	MPH	GPH**	MPG	RUNNING ANGLE
1500	7.63	3.80	2.00	2°
2000	8.92	6.00	1.48	4°
2500	12.41	8.20	1.51	4°
3000	22.37	10.60	2.20	3°
3500	27.37	13.20	2.07	3°
4000	34.63	16.40	2.11	3°
4500	38.22	20.20	1.89	3°
5000	42.76	25.20	1.70	3°
5300	46.08	30.00	1.54	3°

Maximum cruising range at optimum cruising speed of 27.37 mph, about 114 statute miles, with estimated 55 gallons available fuel from 60-gal tank.

**Speeds based on clocked times over measured course with two persons aboard and full fuel tanks. Speeds timed with Rolex Cosmograph timepieces.*

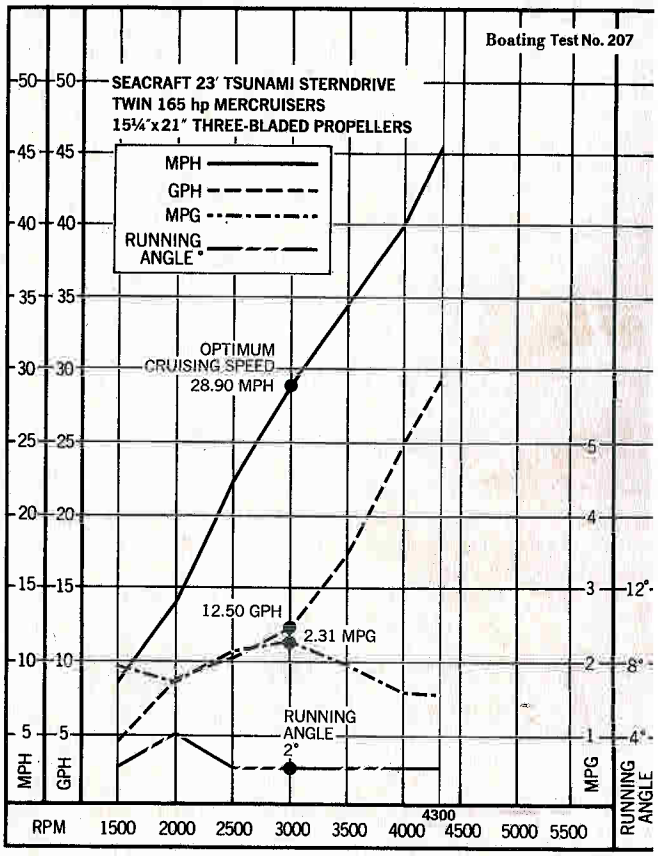
***Fuel consumption figures supplied by engine manufacturer.*

PROPULSION and PERFORMANCE

Sterndrive Test Power Plant: Twin 165 hp MerCruiser sterndrive 6-cyl gasoline engines with 250 cu in piston displacement; and power trim.

Optional Power: Single and twin sterndrive units ranging from single 130 hp Volvo to twin 165 hp MerCruisers.

Performance Curves*



RPM	MPH	GPH	MPG	RUNNING ANGLE
1500	8.58	4.50	1.90	2°
2000	13.95	8.0	1.74	4°
2500	22.73	10.50	2.16	2°
3000	28.90	12.50	2.31	2°
3500	34.85	17.50	1.99	2°
4000	40.26	25.00	1.61	2°
4300	45.82	29.00	1.58	2°

Maximum cruising range at optimum cruising speed of 28.90 mph, about 127 statute miles, with estimated 55 gallons available fuel from 60-gal tank.

**Speeds based on clocked times over measured course with two persons aboard and full fuel tanks. Speeds timed with Rolex Cosmograph timepieces. Fuel consumption measured with Brooks Instrument flowmeter.*

Brooks's instructions and connected it in the line between tank and engine . . . only to find that Brooks really knew the drill.

The readings were no good, and the engine was sucking up air bubbles in the fuel line. We checked and double-checked connections, but to no avail. We shut down, and reluctantly abandoned the attempt to find out how much fuel the big Mercs were burning. (In our performance chart, fuel consumption figures for each rpm setting are those furnished to us by engineers at Mercury Marine.)

Our speed trials were finished by early dusk, and we returned to Dinner Key in the dark. Tsunami's running lights, to International Rule, consist of a combination port/starboard light right in the bow, a combination anchor/bow light on a short staff atop the windshield, and a 12-pt stern light aft—on a retractable staff on the outboard, recessed into the transom of the sterndrive. The bow light on the windshield staff, not provided with a screen, throws white light all over the foredeck and even the instrument panel, effectively night-blinding the helmsman. It was so bad that we cobbled up a makeshift screen from a piece of cardboard and some tape, just so we could find the channel markers.

Before we had a chance to mention this deficiency to SeaCraft's Bill Potter, he mentioned it to us: "I know you are going to complain that the bow light blinds the helmsman, and you're right. I ran the boat to Bimini, and found I had to douse the bow light in order to see anything at all. So we're designing the screen right now, and all production Tsunamis will have them!"

Early next morning, we picked up the outboard Tsunami, topped off her 60-gallon fuel tank, and headed south in Biscayne Bay, bound for the upper Keys. In the prevailing light chop her ride was almost boringly soft—this is in marked contrast to her near-sister hull, the SeaCraft Seafari 20 (Boat Test No. 172, November, 1969), which was an excellent rough-water boat, but tended to be a little bit bumpy in a light chop.

With the Tsunami, we couldn't find a sea condition she didn't like, and we often found ourself bracing for an impact, in wake-jumping, that turned out to be almost no impact at all. Even when we flew her off the top of a big one so that her entire bottom and even propellers were out of the water, she'd return to her element with surprisingly little jolt. It's undoubtedly a combination of her excellent bottom design and her remarkably flat running angle, but whatever causes it, it's the kind of behavior that builds confidence in the boat.

MAJOR SAFETY FEATURES RECOMMENDED BY ABYC* for this class of boat

Seacraft 23′ Tsunami Outboard

Item	*Standard*	*Optional*
Bilge blower	—	✓
Hand bilge pump	—	✓
Electric bilge pump	—	✓
Nonslip weather decks	✓	—
Fuel shut-off valves	—	✓
Grounded fuel system	✓	—
Battery secured and covered	✓	—

**This list does not include U.S. Coast Guard required equipment but reflects key recommendations of the American Boat & Yacht Council, Inc., the industry's standards-making body.*

MAJOR SAFETY FEATURES RECOMMENDED BY ABYC* for this class of boat

Seacraft 23′ Tsunami Sterndrive

Item	*Standard*	*Optional*
Bilge blower	✓	—
Hand bilge pump	—	✓
Electric bilge pump	✓	—
Nonslip weather decks	✓	—
Fuel shut-off valves	✓	—
Grounded fuel system	✓	—
Battery secured and covered	✓	—

**This list does not include U.S. Coast Guard required equipment but reflects key recommendations of the American Boat & Yacht Council, Inc., the industry's standards-making body.*

We pulled into Elliot Key and dropped the hook in crystal clear water near a beach that would have been unspoiled but for its litter of beer cans left behind by careless boatmen. It seemed a better place than most to check out the details of Tsunami's fittings and layout.

Tsunami's companionway hatch consists of a removable, hinged cover, the forward portion of which is fitted with a large smoky Plexiglas panel to allow light below without sacrificing privacy. With this hatch removed completely and stowed to one side on the wall-to-wall bunk in the cuddy, and with the center portion of the bunk cushion also stowed to one side, Tsunami's folding cockpit ladder can be set into special fittings on the bunk to provide steps up through the center-opening windshield, to the foredeck. The foredeck, of course, is finished from gunwale to gunwale with SeaCraft's very good nonslip pattern, so it is a reasonably safe place for a line handler to work, particularly when the boat is fitted with the $195 extra bow rail. But with the center panel of the windshield open, and with the ladder in place, it's possible to handle bow lines without leaving the ladder. It's a convenient arrangement, and a good safety feature.

Flanking the combination light fitting in the bow are a pair of eight-inch bow cleats, mounted right on the gunwale. With the bow cleats in this position, no chocks are required, and of course the foredeck is clear of toe-busters. Our test boat was not fitted with midship cleats—if we were buying this boat, we'd spend the extra $20 to have them. Eight-inch stern cleats are mounted inside the cockpit, fisherman style, with excellent deck pipes above. All hardware is solidly through-bolted, and with the exception of the s.s. bow rail, all deck hardware is Marinium.

Both outboard and sterndrive models have insulated ice chests molded into the stern, with deck-level, hinged fiberglass hatches and overboard drains. They're remarkably useful compartments—for ice and cold drinks, for tools or fishing gear, or even for a day-trip trash locker. And both outboard and sterndrive boats have large (34 gal) bait wells—the outboard's being molded into the outboard well itself, the sterndrive's set into the sole ahead of the engines.

The cockpit is big—13′ by 6′ 8″—and SeaCraft offers a variety of alternatives to the standard layout of twin pedestal seats: insulated ice chest seats, insulated ice chest with twin swivel seats, back-to-back lounge seats, and the like. Our

outboard test boat had the "custom couch with insulated storage box in lieu of companion pedestal seat," a $350 option. It provides comfortable seating for three, a good single berth, and plenty of room underneath for the installation of basic galley facilities. SeaCraft intends to build a compact galley unit to go with this box.

Both helmsman's and companion seats are adjustable, and both have solid teak footrests bolted to the console—solid enough to stand on. The adjustable, non-magnetic, stainless steel wheel, a $38 extra, can be set in any of four tilt positions, and is well worth the cost. Both outboard and sterndrive models are fitted with MerControl single lever controls, comfortably situated to starboard of the helm. They function reliably, but the outboard's controls tended to back off from their settings, particularly in upper ranges of rpm—no doubt a question of adjustment.

Tsunami's windshield is safety glass, sturdily framed in anodized aluminum. Both side panels open out, and up, and the center panel, which is made of Plexiglas, is hinged on the port side to open and lie back against the port windshield panel. American Bosch windshield wipers are available as extras at $120 each.

A carpet-lined glove compartment on the port side provides handy stowage for miscellaneous personal gear, particularly cameras. Rod racks and shelves are fitted port and starboard in the cockpit sides, aft. Excellent stowage for dock lines, fenders, and life preservers is provided in the "step down"—a recess in the sole between the two seats and extending forward into the cuddy to accommodate the optional head under the berth—but a hatch cover for this five-foot long well is a $95 extra. We'd take it.

With the exception of the "step down," which drains into the bilge, Tsunami's cockpit is self-draining, through scuppers aft. These lead straight down through the bottom; when the boat is under way excellent suction is created, and when the boat is at rest gravity does the trick.

The cuddy cabin is all bunk—6' 1" long, 5' 1" wide at the after end. Full-length teak-trimmed shelves run along both sides, and there's generous stowage for bedding under the port and starboard sections of the bunk—and this space is finished inside with a fiberglass liner, an excellent feature for keeping the space, and the stuff stowed there, clean. The center section of the bunk opens up to reveal space for the head: In the test boat, a Thetford Sea Farer recirculating head was installed ($175 extra).

The cabin overhead is lined in white carpeting, which looks good, and which can, if necessary, be pulled loose around the edges to gain access to the nuts on the through-bolted deck hardware. Separating the bunk area from the rope locker forward is a teak-grained Formica bulkhead and door. Cabin lighting is provided by a 12v fixture on the after bulkhead, to starboard.

After a stem-to-stern check for flaws, we couldn't find much to complain about, except that it's rather difficult to get forward on the narrow side decks, particularly if the boat is

fitted with the optional Navy top. But this isn't a valid complaint, considering the excellent access provided through the center-opening windshield. We don't like the snap clips for the top on the aluminum windshield—it's possible to cut your hand on them if you really try—but Tsunami's weren't as sharp as many we've seen. And that's about all.

We reluctantly fired up the two big Mercs, and flew back north in Biscayne Bay, looking for wakes to jump, still bracing ourself each time we found one, for the impact that somehow never came. We tucked her back into her spot at a Coral Gables dock, tied up, washed her down, and left—with a deal more regret than usual.

Later on, we spent a productive four hours at the SeaCraft plant in Princeton, Fla. This was our introduction to the new plant, a huge, walled-in structure that covers about a city block. The old plant, in Hialeah, proved too small for SeaCraft's burgeoning business and was phased out several years ago.

The Tsunami 23 is assembled from six major fiberglass components—hull, twin longitudinal stringers, forward hull liner (fitted under the bunks to form a gel coat-finished stowage area), hull liner, and deck. According to Bill Potter, the average Tsunami has up to 23 fiberglass parts. Just about the only piece of wood used structurally, with the exception of balsa core, is an encapsulated 2 x 4 keelson along the centerline.

Her assembly procedure starts with the installation of the hat-section fiberglass stringers, which are bonded and taped in place with plies of 1½-oz mat and 22-oz woven roving lapped over the bottom to supply additional thickness in these areas. The stringers, and a large area of the bottom, are filled with a rigid 2-lb density pour-in-place foam. According to Potter, there is about 35 cu ft of foam in each boat. A quick calculation, based on the weight of salt water, indicated a positive flotation value in the neighborhood of 2100 lbs. However, Potter feels that in the near future the foam will have to be redistributed, probably under the gunwales, to provide upright flotation.

Forward liner and hull liner are dropped into the hull and are bonded under pressure with a polyester paste. The depth of the hull liner matches that of the hull, thus providing a double thickness of fiberglass along the sheer. The two components are fastened with s.s. screws in addition to the polyester paste. Her deck fits over the hull shoebox fashion and is caulked with a silicone sealant followed by s.s. fastenings that also secure the rub rail.

SeaCraft is one of the few builders who offer a choice of rub rails—a rugged all-vinyl rail, or if you prefer a little glitter, an aluminum extrusion with a vinyl insert. We would opt for the all-vinyl number since there is no corrosion problem to worry about and it provides a larger area of fending surface.

While we were looking over a partially completed hull, Potter remarked that just about every major deck hardware bolt is accessible for tightening, or if need be, for replacing

the item. By removing the after vent scoops, you can get a wrench on the nuts for the s.s. towing eyes. The after cleat bolts are accessible through a plastic Pyhi deck plate, and the forward cleats can be reached through the chain locker. These touches are typical of the planning that has gone into the Tsunami.

It was evident that the same care and planning went into every detail of the boat—wiring was color-coded in accordance with BIA (Boating Industry Associations) standards, batteries were readily accessible and neatly secured, and the ventilation system well thought-out. In all, a very impressive example of the present day boatbuilder's art.

There is little doubt that you can find a twin outboard or twin sterndrive 23-footer, maybe even a red one, for less money than you'll have to pay for the Tsunami 23. And you probably won't find a Tsunami 23 in the low-price, high-pressure salesrooms—but our guess is you'll see a lot of them on the water.

Real quality is never a bad buy. ⚓