

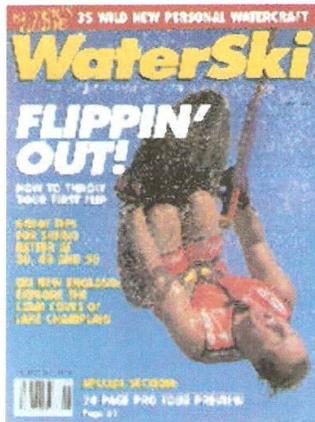
BOAT REVIEW May '95 Waterski Magazine

Double Duty - R.M.

Magazine Articles Testing Summaries

When Cougar Boats distributor Dan Weeden pulled up in our office parking lot, I was a bit skeptical. He was towing a 21-footer complete with six-color gelcoat and a big-block MerCruiser, giving the impression that this was more California river racer than friendly inland lake runabout.

Soon Weeden was darting nimbly inside the cockpit. He uncorked a powder-coated Billet aluminum ski pylon from the massive in-floor ski locker and proceeded to screw it into the floor mount just ahead of the engine compartment. He pointed out several well-placed vinyl storage packets that could hold gloves, wallets or keys. Each colorful cushion he lifted revealed enough under-seat storage for an entire crew's vests and ropes. Then the big decal on the stem set my mind at ease: 20.5 Sport Skier.



FAST LOOKS

Part of my initial skepticism was due to the Skier's low slung design and incredibly fast looks. The six-color gelcoat in both hull and deck on our test boat (five is standard) was impeccable, with no signs of print-through.

Inside the Skier looked just as slick. The seats were color-matched with the gelcoat and included satin-stitched logos. The rear bench, twin bucket seats and bow section were fully padded, covering marine-treated plywood generously saturated with resin.

The Skier broke the water with an 18-degree entry, followed by a rounded bottom that included six strakes and two reverse chines to help knock down spray and keep the Skier in the water during tight turns.

Powder-coated grab rails permeated the shallow bow section, and the entire I design was highlighted by unique vertical pop-up cleats that enhanced the smooth lines and were easy to slip a docking rope around.

SLOW-SPEED SOARING HIGH-SPEED THRILLS

The 20.5 Sport Skier File

- Length: 20 feet, inches Beam: 86 inches
 - Fuel Capacity: 54 gallons
 - Seating: Seven skiers
 - Weight: 2,600 lbs.
- Standard POWER MerCruiser 350 Magnum, 260 hp
- Optional POWER: MerCruiser 7.4L, 300 hp (tested)

- **MSRP on Test Boat: \$29,600 (w/STD tandem trailer)**

Further proof that the 20.5 Sport Skier's name was no misnomer came when we hooked up the rope. It wasn't named Hot Boat Magazine's Ski Boat of the Year just because of the pylon. It's got great skiing wakes at all speeds.

The big MerCruiser 7.4-liter with Bravo One drive not only gave the Skier plenty of punch, but had enough girth to leave behind giant launch ramps with clean, stiletto peaks. Vertical lift for both kneeboarders and wakeboarders was easy; however, the table was a little wide at slower speeds (15-18 mph) for wake-to-wake jumps. When we took the Skier up to 20 mph, though, the table narrowed while wake height remained high.

Slalom speeds (28-36 mph) produced low wakes with minor foam that will be easily crossable by recreational skiers. And if you decide on a short line, you won't have to worry about spray.

While boarding and slalom wakes are skier-friendly, it may be the speed mongers who'll take a more serious look at the Skier. Footers won't plod through deepwater starts with the big 7.4L under the hood, and the stainless Quicksilver 21 Mirage propeller keeps the action going at speed. Two footers can frolic in the shallow curls with plenty of throttle to spare.

The longboard revolution (Water Ski, Nov./Dec. '94) will continue to grow as long as boats like this are around. With a top skiing speed over 60 mph, the Skier is the perfect vehicle for long river cruises or big lake adventures. Don't be surprised to see a couple on Lake Powell or Lake of the Ozarks this summer.

OUR ASSESSMENT

For the inland boater who wants a go-fast attitude packaged in a water-sports workhorse, the 20.5 Sport Skier is about as close as it gets. It's tame with a two-especially for boarders--and when it comes lime to burn water for barefooting or fast cruising, there's plenty of throttle to spare.-R.M.

On Target

Excellent gelcoat work and interior appointments. The ski pylon and huge in-Floor ski locker are two of the best designs we've ever seen on an inboard/outboard configuration.

Off the Mark

The speedo is set too low on dash and should have 1 mph gradations in the lower ranges (15-20 mph) for towing kids and boarders. Throttle needs constant attention at slow speeds.

Cougar web-note: Prices and some details may have been changed and/or adjusted from the time this article was written.