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has been clocked at a blistering 102 mph at 5600 rpm, and with even more horsepower, he says, racing versions should be capable of speeds over 140 mph. Moreover, the Hustler 50 Performance Yacht version with deluxe accommodations that's being introduced this winter is expected to have a top-speed capability in the 90s—almost unheard-of in a luxury boat.

Compared to many other high performance boats running at such high speeds, the 50 was an amazingly easy, user-friendly and civilized boat to drive. When we started our run, it eased onto plane at 2000 rpm at 25 mph in just three to four seconds without any noticeable bow rise, quickly reached a comfortable cruising speed of about 60 mph at 3500 rpm, and in a flash was doing over 95 mph at about 5300 rpm. Tests show that fuel use at cruise is a relatively economical 52 gph. The 50 can also "cruise" at a sprightly 70 mph at 4000 rpm, burning 68 gph. In hard turns at 60 mph, the boat was responsive and felt rock-solid as it grabbed and carved the water without any skidding and with minimal heeling.

The ride was also very dry, and despite the absence of a windshield (though I'd recommend the optional add-on), we didn't get unduly blasted, since the foredeck cowling above the dash does a good job of deflecting the wind. Also notable was the absence of the conversation-drowning roar and pronounced vibrations typical of high performance boats—thanks to the 50's excellent engine compartment insulation and the quiet, smooth-running Lamborghinis themselves. (See the accompanying sidebar for more details on these engines.)

But the most striking thing about this revolutionary design—which I truly would never have believed had I not experienced it for myself—was its smooth, stable ride, even at high speeds in rough water. When Fiore first told me, "The faster you go, the better and more stable the ride feels," I was admittedly skeptical. But as we approached top speed, the ride went from feeling extremely smooth and stable to *exceptionally* smooth and stable as it sliced through the waves with increasing power. There was absolutely no launching, crashing, pounding, shimmying or chine-walking as we ran at high speeds in all directions in the heavy three-foot chop. Where many a deep-V would have launched off the wavetops, bow flying up, the 50's running attitude stayed level at all times, and its tracking remained absolutely straight and true. Hustler reports that the boat has even handled eight- to 10-foot seas at 80 mph with no problem.

"The faster you go, the better and more stable the ride feels."

In short, the Hustler feels extremely safe and secure. That's because Paul Fiore designed it that way. "My number-one priority is safety," he says, "because I've been hurt on a boat." A former IBM systems engineer and car and boat racer, he founded what was previously called Hustler Industries in 1978 after a bad accident on Long Island Sound in another manufacturer's 25-foot, 65-mph sportboat. "The boat flew off a wave, went over sideways and came down hard. I was thrown around and almost killed. I wound up with a broken pelvis, ribs and spine." So, he says, he set out to design "the world's safest, strongest speedboat"—not only exceptionally stable, but also "basically indestructible."

A free-thinking innovator, Fiore began developing his concepts by studying the technology of seaplane pontoons. The aerodynamically shaped 50, an evolution of the builder's 40-footer, has an LOA of 48'6" with a relatively narrow 8' beam and a deep-V hull with 24-degree transom deadrise.

But what really sets the Hustler apart is its innovative "variable-deadrise, ventilated deep-V hull bottom with long footprint," Fiore says. The 50's footprint or total running surface at high speeds spans almost 28 feet, along which there are 18 contact points on three distinct surfaces, compared to the single aft running surface of only about four feet or so on most large high performance deep-Vs. This eliminates the typical bow-high planing attitude in favor of a more level planing attitude which reduces both air and water resistance, increasing both stability and speed. Breaking up the running surface into these separate shorter ones, with air distributed more evenly along the hull bottom, also reduces drag by enhancing lift. All this is achieved with four unique variable-width longitudinal running strakes interrupted by two transverse steps or "vents" toward the stern that draw in cushions of air to ride on. Drag is further reduced by the fact that the running surfaces are made absolutely straight and consistent. A bonus of drag reduction is that it boosts fuel economy as well as speed. For precision in tracking and turning, both the strakes and chines also have extra-sharp edges.

Virtually everything about this boat is top-quality, from its construction to its fittings. The builder's penchant for perfectionism is reflected in a lamination schedule that keeps Hustler hulls in the mold for almost a month as opposed to less than a week for most production boats—to make sure that the fiberglass is 100 percent cured and can't change shape. In all, a Hustler takes some three months to build.

The boat's construction utilizes the most advanced materials and technology available—hand-laid bi- and triaxial fiberglass, vinylester resin, Divinycell and balsa coring, and vacuum-bagging. The hull has 10 to 16 layers of fiberglass, considerably more than on most production high performance hulls; four full-length, fully encapsulated stringers, and 16 bulkheads. The stringers, bulkheads, fuel and water tanks, cockpit sole, and principal interior structures are all glassed in while the hull is still in the mold, after which the hull and deck are bolted and fiberglassed together.

Careful attention is also paid to weight distribution for proper balance, with most of the weight of both construction materials and equipment kept low. The main fuel tank is positioned

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