Ever since we began publishing Pontoon & Deck Boat magazine five years ago, the Chaparral Sunesta has been the one boat we have always lusted over. We have looked forward each year to testing a Sunesta model at our Shootout. This year was no different and takes top honors as Family Deck Boat of the Year.

We had tested the 232 before, but never with a Volvo for power. So imagine our delight when the boat showed up with a 7.4 GI/SX aboard. We knew from previous experience that the 232 is a well-built family boat, so this year we were simply waiting to see if any competitor could steal its thunder. None did.

As we ran our test again, we became reaquainted with some of the industry’s best construction techniques starting from the hull up. The hull design is an extended V-plane with a 16-degree dead rise. It is built alternating layers of 24-ounce woven roving and fiberglass mat, using ME 4000 resin and a premium gelcoat. It earned such remarks from our on-trailer inspector as “excellent mold work.” Closed cell foam is injected into an XL panel stringer and floor system for additional strength, flotation and noise insulation.

The deck is also constructed of AME 4000 resin with a premium gelcoat, alternating layers of 24-ounce woven roving using syntactic foam and balsa core, an expensive alternative to plywood. Yet it is lighter, stronger and conforms to the deck well.

The high quality resin on the hull and deck prevents bottom blisters and the premium gelcoat resists yellowing, fading and chalking.

It’s not just that the 232 is well built. It is also well finished with lids, latches, hatches and levers all fitting near perfectly in their places. And the vinyl is a whopping 40 lbs. and the seams are all double French stitched. The wiring job on this boat is outstanding, everything is bundled and secured into place. Plus, the boat is and always has been one of the most attractive vessels on the water.

Family amenities aboard include a large swim deck with an integrated, self-draining ice chest; a transom wash down, retractable showerhead (this same amenity is found on the bow as well as a bow ladder) and stainless steel grab railing.

There are four coolers on this boat and the refreshment center is a unique but attractive triangular shape with a sink with a water faucet that is run by an electrical pump. It also has a trash receptacle and self-draining ice chest and storage underneath. It has surface area to prep your food as long as the lids to the ice chest and the garbage are down.

The helm is loaded and has some cool features like a locking wallet storage compartment in the gunwale and flip-out captain’s cup holder. Drivers/controls ergonomics is good.

The helm seat is a two-person bucket that slides for adjustment. There is an integrated footrest in the base of the helm.

We found this engine package and setup to be a bit louder than packages we have tested in the past on the 232. With a 7.4, that makes sense, and there were some noticeable vibrations around 1500 rpm. Since this is the only 232 this has occurred on of all we have tested, we consider it to be an anomaly specific to that one boat.

All in all, this is a great family boat that is well built and has a great fit and finish. We like the 232 very much — so much so that it wins our pick for Family Deck Boat of the Year even though it has a higher price tag due to the larger engine package. It is a fast and fun boat and we think it is well worth it.

**Boat Specs**

- **LOA:** 23'3''
- **Beam:** 8'6''
- **Hull Design:** Fiberglass
- **Dry Weight:** 3,832 lbs.
- **Load Capacity:** 14 persons
- **Fuel Capacity:** 58 gallons
- **Test Engine:** 7.4 GI/SX Volvo Penta
- **Test Propeller:** 14 1/4 x 23
- **Price of Test Boat:** $41,851

**Test Facts and Figures**

- **Top Speed:** 49.8 mph
- **Speed at 3000 rpm:** 31.7 mph
- **Fuel at 3000 rpm:** 15.5 gph
- **do-a @ Idle:** 64 decibels
- **Any Rattles:** No
- **No. of Gears:** 3
- **Boarding Ladder:** Yes

For more information on this boat go to: pdbworld.com

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