RED HOT
Chaparral's new flagship, the 400 Premiere Sport Yacht, will turn heads in any port.

BY CAPT. VINCENT DANIELLO
As we cast off, I have the distinct impression that a 42-footer is a bit of overkill for Lake Norman in North Carolina. Yet the owner of this 400 Premier Sport Yacht, the new flagship from Chaparral, spared no expense for his cruiser, opting for the largest IPS diesels, an air-conditioned bridge, satellite TV and radar. "This isn’t the biggest boat on the lake, but it’s the nicest one," says David Lowman, the owner of The Boat Rack on Lake Norman who sold this Chaparral and who joins me on this sea trial.

Chaparral built this 400 to a level of refinement I’ve seen on 80-foot motoryachts, but the owner didn’t choose this boat and its options simply to flaunt a sophisticated cruising machine. Lowman says his plans include trucking the boat to Charleston, South Carolina, for coastal runs and adventures to the Bahamas. Fortunately, this model is practical for both applications.

It’s hard not to like the coupe style of the 400. Bimini tops, and even hardtops with sliding glass enclosures, can create barriers between passengers and the outdoors. In addition, metal legs, braces and bows reduce visibility and encroach on interior volume. By comparison, the 400 has large, frameless windows under a fiberglass top; there’s nothing to block the skipper’s view of the horizon other than the stainless-steel bow rail on the foredeck. Opening vents (they are electric) in the side windows, overhead hatches and electric-powered blinds bring the outdoors in. The coupe offers other benefits, including ample headroom, overhead lighting and protection for an LCD television built into the wet bar. These features make the bridge a room, not a canvas cave. Remember, most boating memories are created on deck, not in the cabin, so why not make the bridge more inviting?

The 400 is offered with all the amenities you’d expect to find in a serious cruiser, including wraparound seating in the cockpit, a barbecue grill and a wet bar. The builder also added a few surprises: The iso berths, stainless-steel, drawer-style refrigeration/freezer is easy to access while underway, and a solid teak and polished stainless-steel cockpit table stores out of the way when it’s not being used. Back-to-back seating at the stern folds out electrically and converts to a large, flat sun pad. Other thoughtful details include a recess in the cockpit sole for the swim platform gate, so when hatched open it won’t catch bare feet. I also like the selectable white, red or blue direct and indirect LED lighting. Chaparral even offers overhead high-pressure water misters to keep passengers cool in the summer heat.

Belowdecks, the boat’s most unique and important feature is subtle but effective: It’s Chaparral’s Wide-Tech bow, which creates two pointed spotters above the waterline.
that serve to widen the bow by 19 inches, thereby increasing the beam and interior volume from the stem to midship. With more room, Chaparral was able to fit a 60-inch by 80-inch island queen berth in the forward stateroom, along with a head to port and a matching stall shower to starboard. The added beam also makes for deeper lockers and drawers. The builder even managed a small vanity and enough space aft of the berth to get dressed. Note, however, that 30 inches of the foot of the bed fold up and down electrically, so ample space to dress by day becomes tight overnight when the berth is extended.

The salon (with C-shaped settee) and galley are both very roomy. Rather than press the galley flat against the port side, Chaparral built it in an “L” shape with more counter and drawer space.

At the aft end of the cabin is the entrance to a lounge area that doubles as a stateroom when the settee is converted to a berth. Near the entrance is the vanity that serves the nearby head compartment with a shower and commode. Because this midcabin is tucked beneath the cockpit deck, the headroom is modest, but that’s common on this type of express-style cruiser. In this space, features include a TV and DVD player. It’s not the layout, but the accoutrements that most shape my impressions of the interior. Dark walnut — quarter-sawn and finished so the wood’s tight linear grain is seen and felt — is used judiciously. Brushed stainless-steel appliances, handrails and hardware are handsomely modern. Japanese Shoji-inspired translucent doors open onto the forward and aft staterooms and make the most of the available light.

Equipped with twin Volvo IPS 600 diesels, the 400’s performance is outstanding. Even with six months of lake growth on the running surface, the boat tops out at 40 mph. Both high- and low-speed handling are nothing less than superb, and the boat rises up on plane so evenly there isn’t any speed at which I can’t see easily over the bow.

The IPS joystick allows Lowman to dock effortlessly into a tight slip obviously built with smaller boats in mind. But rather than again considering how this boat fits in on Lake Norman, I can’t help but think how well the 400 Premiere Sport Yacht will accompany the mega-yachts tied up at the Charleston City Marina.

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**SPECIFICATIONS**

- **LOA (w/swim platform):** 42’
- **Beam:** 13’ 4”
- **Draft:** 3’ 9”
- **Disp.:** 23,000 lbs.
- **Fuel:** 300 gals.
- **Water:** 77 gals.
- **Transom Deadrise:** 18 degrees
- **Contact:** Chaparral Boats, chaparralboats.com
- **Price (w/test power):** $704,356

**PERFORMANCE**

**TEST POWER:** (2) 435 hp Volvo Penta IPS 600 diesels. Speeds measured by GPS on Lake Norman, North Carolina, in calm winds and seas with three people aboard, full fuel and one eight-foot tank water. Fuel consumption measured by Volvo instruments. Sound levels measured in DB-A at the helm.

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**INSIDE:** 1. The Wide Tech bow adds beam where it counts, in the forward stateroom. The foot of the bed folds up by day to provide more floor space. 2. A large dinette with a high/low table converts to a berth for two. 3. The L-shaped galley boasts an oversize sink and large refrigerator with freezer below. We like the numerous self-closing drawers and cabinets. 4. In the cockpit, the aft seat raises for access to the engine room. Fore- and aft-facing transom seats unfold electrically into a sun pad.

**PROS:**
- The coupe top provides outstanding visibility and comfort in any weather.
- Chaparral went decided upscale with material and component choices.
- The Wide Tech bow won't affect performance, but the added buoyancy helps push the bow up and over large waves.

**CONS:**
- The aft stateroom will certainly appeal to youngsters, but it might be tight for adults.
- Air conditioner controls could be easier to reach from the forward berth and salon.