VERSATILE Bay Boat

by Peter Miller,
Host of Bass2Billfish

Versatility should be a priority when you're in the market for a new boat. Whether you fish inshore, venture offshore on calm days, or your weekends are spent with your family at the sandbar, a bay boat is the perfect choice for all-around use. In a bay boat, you have the shallow-water capability of a skiff, but the stability and sturdy hull to run in choppy water. This type of boat gives families the opportunity for a wide variety of boating. Also, with constant innovation in outboard motor technology, these boats are very economical to run. My Yellowfin 24 Bay provides the function, reliability and features I need, all in a well-thought-out fishing machine.

A nearshore angler needs a boat that can float in shallow water, but with enough deadrise to handle sloppy conditions. I fish in the Everglades area as well as Biscayne Bay. When we are chasing redfish and snook in the backcountry, or bonefish and permit on the flats, skinny water is the name of the game. My Yellowfin 24 Bay floats in less than 15 inches of water with a half-tower and can accommodate four anglers comfortably. Having the ability to fish the flats or backcountry with multiple anglers is efficient, especially when sight fishing. It helps to have multiple eyes to spot fish. Also, when I'm filming Bass2Billfish, my 24 Bay is loaded down with camera equipment and fishing gear - a skiff could not meet my needs.

On a boat this size, a poling platform is out of the question. For the shallow-water angler in a boat this size, a trolling motor is the correct tool. I use the MotorGuide Xi5 Pinpoint GPS unit. This trolling motor has a wireless remote, providing you with precise motor and steering control from anywhere in

YELLOWFIN 24 BAY specs:

Length: .....24′ 10″
Beam: .....8′ 6″
Draft: .....14″ (loaded)
Weight: .....3050 lbs. (loaded)
Fuel: .....75 Gallons
Max horsepower: .....350 hp

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Peter Miller's 24 Yellowfin Bay is outfitted with a 300 HP Mercury Verado, which shares much of the same technology as the new 350 and 400 versions. Learn more about the Mercury Verado family of engines in the propulsion section on page 14.

your boat. These motors also have route recording, autopilot/cruise control, jog, and anchor features. The anchor mode is particularly useful when you're alone. In Biscayne Bay, I cruise the channels in between the flats. When I spot a fish, I press the anchor mode to hold me in position while I work the area. This feature is also useful when bottom fishing. When I'm over a piece of bottom structure, I put the trolling motor in anchor mode to hold me in position. From there, I can jog the motor to the left or right a few feet, until I've found the fish.

Having a bay boat this size also gives you the ability to cross big water without getting beat up. At 24' 10", having an 8' 6" beam and a 15-degree deadrise, the Yellowfin 24 Bay is a stable, solid fishing platform. The large displacement of this size hull provides more room for storage, as well. When tournament fishing, you need to be prepared for whatever is thrown at you. That means traveling with way more gear and bait than the average angler. Bay boats in the 23' to 25' range provide the storage capacity to pack all of your gear; fishing, camping, water skiing... whatever items you need for an extended jaunt.

Features like large, well aerated livewells are important for hardcore fisherman. Top fishing boat manufacturers, including Yellowfin, take priority in livewell design and then build their hulls around them. My boat has 35-gallon bait and release wells with big pumps for recirculation. The livewells have an oval shape to mimic a bait fish's natural environment and to prevent bait sloshing around and getting beat up while running.

For light tackle or fly fishing, having a clear, obstruction-free casting platform is important. Recessed cleats, rod holders and hatches prevent snags while casting and throwing nets. Also, adequate rod storage is very important. My boat is loaded with rod holders on the leaning post, tower, in the bow and stern, and has five vertical rod holders on each side of the console.

Another feature of my boat that is vital is the tower. If you're running the beaches or shoreline trying to spot fish, a tower is a great asset. You'll see lots of fish you would have missed because you're able to look down through the surface from much farther away. I use mine when I fish solo. I'll bring two rods in the tower with me and slowly cruise the channels in Biscayne Bay with my trolling motor. A tower will take your sight casting to a new level.

> "I'VE OWNED BOATS MY ENTIRE LIFE AND I HAVE TO SAY, THE YELLOWFIN 24 BAY IS HANDS-DOWN MY FAVORITE. I HAVE THE SHALLOW DRAFT TO FLOAT IN SKINNY WATER, BUT ALSO THE STABILITY TO FISH THE REEF AND OFFSHORE." *- Peter Miller*

Trailer ability and storage is a big consideration when choosing a boat. A lot of the fishing I do involves trailering my boat across the state, or to wherever the bite is hot. The convenience of easily traveling with your boat is paramount. Many bay boats can be towed with SUVs. Of course, tow vehicle maintenance is extremely important, especially for your transmission and brakes.

Bay boats are meant to run fast. Most boats in this class feature semi-displacement hulls with a high horsepower rating. Yellowfin's 24 Bay is rated for up to 350 hp with a 75-gallon fuel tank. This affords me the ability to run to remote locations while not having to worry about my fuel. My boat is rigged with a Mercury Verado 300 Pro Four Stroke. This motor is the best I've run yet. It's lightweight, economical, quiet, responsive, and smooth, with minimal vibration.

If you're looking for a do-everything type of boat, a bay boat may be the smartest choice for you. Bay boats are affordable, customizable, economical, and safe. For my use, Yellowfin's 24 Bay provides me with the performance, features, and reliability I need for the considerable amount of time I spend on the water.

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