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BLUE WAVE





2400 *Pure Bay*



WINNER OF THE SMART BUY FISH BOAT SHOOTOUT!

Beasts of the Bay BY THE BOATING TECH TEAM

Bay boats have evolved. What started as a class of no-frills 20-footers has morphed into bigger boats with top-of-the-line features and finish. Right now there are a slew of new boats longer than 22'. We recently tested four of our favorites in a showdown to see which one wins the title as best of the biggies.

	THE BASICS	DETAILS	PERFORMANCE	FISHABILITY	HIGHS & LOWS
<p>BLUE WAVE 2400 PURE BAY www.bluewaveboats.com 800/432-6768</p> 	<p>LOA 24'5" Beam 8'6" Draft (max.) 1'9" Displacement (lbs., approx.; w/o engine) 2,200 Transom deadrise 16° Fuel capacity (gal.) 80 Price (w/250-hp Yamaha F-250) \$53,995</p>	<p>This boat is so thoroughly outfitted that there are hardly any options to add. One perk is the unique nonslip that looks like tiny waves (the company's logo), which gives amazing grip and doesn't create glare like most white nonslip surfaces. Hatches have no struts but are finished on both sides and dog down tight on gaskets. Aft seats disappear into the rear deck, and there's a bump-out in the foredeck for mounting a trolling motor.</p>	<p>Solid in a choppy head sea and surprisingly stable considering it has the deepest-in-class transom deadrise at 16 degrees. Top end was 51.0 mph. Cruising at 4000 rpm, it hit 33.5 mph and got 3.8 mpg. Like all boats in this test, it jumped onto plane with zero bowrise using its tabs and jack plate. With the jack plate raised 8", it was possible to run through water less than a foot deep.</p>	<p>Five tackleboxes under each aft seat. Four rocket launchers on the leaning post, six vertical holders, bowdeck rodboxes with molded-in racks and protective tip tubes, and four rodracks. The transom bench seat's backrest lifts out to reveal two deck-mounted rodholders. There's a livewell in the aft deck and one forward of the console. The foredeck has a molded-on electric trolling motor mount platform.</p>	<p>HIGHS Molded-in rodracks keep gear safe and secure. Large aft deck means casting room for two. Self-retracting Laser Lines mean no more looking for dock lines. Lots of fish-stowing capacity. LOWS Thin straps secure aft jump seats. You lose the leaning post rodholders when the drop-in backrest is used. Gaskets glued onto hatch bottoms won't last long. They should be inserted in a recess around the locker's edge.</p>
<p>HYDRA-SPORTS 23 BAY BOLT www.hydrasports.com 941/753-7811</p> 	<p>LOA 22'11" Beam 8'10" Draft (max.) 1'7" Displacement (lbs., approx.; w/o engine) 3,100 Transom deadrise 14° Fuel capacity (gal.) 77 Price (w/250-hp Yamaha F-250) \$52,300</p>	<p>Hatches are fully finished, lockers are gasketed, and the gas-assist struts are perfectly balanced. Grab a handle and pull gently—these hatches seem to open themselves. Look inside the console, and you'll note that the molded-in rodholders are plumbed to a common drain. Stowage boxes in the gunwales make use of typically wasted space. An Armstrong dive ladder is standard.</p>	<p>Again, no bowrise getting on plane. Top end of 53.4 mph tied for first with the Pro-Line. At a 4000 rpm cruise, it hit 32.5 mph while achieving 3.8 mpg. The hullsides are slightly higher than those on most bay boats, and the bow has a good amount of flare. This boat leans toward the open water side of the flats-versus-ocean equation, which is reinforced as it hits a wave and lands solidly.</p>	<p>The Bay Bolt offers premium tackle stowage, with six boxes built into the face of the transom. The console has six vertical rodracks, and there are two gunwale holders. There are also two angled holders on the T-top. There's an insulated forward fishbox in the foredeck with just as much capacity. A 26-gallon livewell is in the aft deck on the port side. The foredeck lip is raised significantly more than on most competitors, which lets you feel safe while you cast.</p>	<p>HIGHS Ties for top-end speed. Extra console space means room for as many as four trolling-motor batteries, plus a starter battery. Dash can handle 12" displays. Flip-up bolster seating is comfortable for sitting or leaning. LOWS Terminal block in bilge is mounted where it will get wet. T-top wiggles and needs beefing up. Anchor locker hatch hits bare fiberglass; install a rubber bumper, please. Lift-out tubs in transom compartments feel flimsy.</p>
<p>PRO-LINE 23 BAY XS www.prolineboats.com 800/344-1281</p> 	<p>LOA 23'0" Beam 8'6" Draft (max.) 1'8" Displacement (lbs., approx.; w/o engine) 3,450 Transom deadrise 15° Fuel capacity (gal.) 80 Price (w/ 250-hp Mercury OptiMax) \$62,115</p>	<p>"Rigged to the teeth" is the best way to describe this boat. It comes with such goodies as three livewells, a jackplate, Power Pole, dual-bank battery charger, trim tabs, and other items that are usually cost-adding options, which partially explains the boat's high initial cost. Eye candy is provided by multiple hull colors and graphics that coordinate with the cushions and canvas. Aluminum is powder-coated in glossy white.</p>	<p>With a top end of 53.4 mph, it ties the Hydra-Sports, and it hit 33.3 mph and 3.7 mpg while cruising at 4000 rpm. Although its efficiency is lower than the others, the difference is negligible. We tested in a stiff 15-mph breeze and found the boat to be more than capable of handling a 2' bay chop.</p>	<p>This is the only contender that has three standard livewells, two lighted and armed with timers, that total 86 gallons of capacity. It also has a huge (96-gallon) fishbox and is pre-wired for a trolling motor. The console houses six vertical rodholders. The forward cockpit is designed to create a forward casting platform. The forward platform also has a base for a pedestal-mounted seat for long days of casting.</p>	<p>HIGHS Ties for top-end speed. More overall livewell capacity than the competition. Integrated leaning post with a full-size backrest and rocket launchers means you don't lose rod-holding capacity to a drop-in backrest. LOWS T-top doesn't come with rocket launchers. Slightly less efficient than these competitors. Reverse-raked transom is stylish but takes away some aft deck space.</p>
<p>RANGER 2400 BAY RANGER www.rangerboats.com 870/453-2222</p> 	<p>LOA 23'7" Beam 8'5" Draft (max.) 1'10" Displacement (lbs., approx.; w/o engine) 2,750 Transom deadrise 14° Fuel capacity (gal.) 80 Price (w/250-hp Yamaha F-250 & trailer) \$48,038</p>	<p>Excellent finish and built for the long haul. Piano hinges on the fully finished hatches distribute stresses and prevent crazing around fasteners. Aft bench seats fold into the deck, protecting the cushions from hooks and gaffs. Console has a molded fiberglass bottom that mates to a raised section of the deck. There's no seam for water or dirt to collect in.</p>	<p>With a full tank and three aboard, rather than two as we had on the other boats here, it hit 49.0 mph. With less weight it should easily break 50 mph, but that's still a tick behind the competition. Cruising efficiency at 4000 rpm was the best here at 3.9 mpg, but it was running at only 30.0 mph. This is one dry boat. Whether heading into the seas, across them, or with them, it absolutely refused to throw spray into the cockpit.</p>	<p>Access to the livewell in the leaning post is hindered by the post's backrest, but pull two pins and swing the backrest forward to open it up. The well is aerated, lighted, and has a timer, and there's a second well under the foredeck. The console houses four vertical holders per side. A forward deckbox is sized to hold a five-gallon bucket, with your cast net inside. There are seat pedestal bases in both the fore and aft decks.</p>	<p>HIGHS Handles large waves well. Efficiency is at the top of the heap. Package includes a custom trailer. Cost is at the low end of the pack. Switch panel is rubberized and watertight. LOWS Anchor locker hatch hits bare fiberglass when opened. Some gas-assist struts were mounted upside-down, which will lead to early failure.</p>

The BOTTOM LINE

The Hydra-Sports is the top contender for boaters who occasionally like to head offshore, but it has a few things that need to be worked out. The Pro-Line dazzled us with its performance and best-in-class livewell systems, but it has a hefty price tag. The

Ranger is a great package—the best bang for your buck—but needs some small improvements before it can lead the pack. The Blue Wave also needs a few tweaks—the gaskets and jump seat straps in particular. But it offers solid performance, construction, and fishability at a good price, which makes it the winner of this contest.