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THE ALL NEW

***Hatteras 54 Convertible!***

*Leader of the Pack*



**EXCLUSIVE**

**PMY TESTED: HATTERAS 54 CONVERTIBLE**

# Ahead

Running hard means running comfortable on Hatteras' 54 Convertible.



# of the Pack

**By Capt. Ken Kreisler Photography by Robert Holland**

**F**or those of you unfamiliar with the beginnings of Hatteras Yachts, let me give you the quick skinny on how it all began. As the story goes, on a particularly snotty day in May 1959, Hatteras founder Willis Slane was not at all happy to be sitting and staring out at the roiling ocean from the windows of the Hatteras Marlin Club in Hatteras, North Carolina.

The majority of the wooden sportfishermen of the time didn't handle the un-

predictable in- and offshore waters of North Carolina all that well, so Slane set out to build a boat out of fiberglass, the upstart new material that was beginning to garner the attention of the boatbuilding world. Four months later, with the financial backing of several friends, he opened up a plant in High Point, North Carolina, and with the help of young naval architect Jack Hargrave, a knowledgeable fiberglasser, and a gang of skilled boatbuilders, built *Knit Wits*, a 41-

**Tweak a proven hull, add two big diesels, and this 54-foot convertible is ready to tear it up with the big dogs.**

foot sportfisherman that was launched on March 22, 1960, thus beginning a heritage of deep-water, horizon-chasing battlewagons of which the 54 Convertible is the latest.

I first met up with the 54 at last year's Miami International Boat Show where she was being previewed. During subsequent visits, I got the opportunity to sit down with Hatteras captain Terry Stansel and discuss how this boat was conceived. "We started out with a wish list of what we wanted to fit inside, including lots of stowage, suitable quarters for crew if necessary, and a workable engine room space and drew the boat around that," he said.

To say that Stansel is familiar with the 54 would be an understatement. Besides being a member of the Hatteras Design Team, for about ten months out of the year, he and wife Bonnie call the 54 *Hatterascal* home, traveling the big-fish tourney and boat show circuits and also providing prospective owners with demo sea trials.

"Fortunately we had some guys at our New Bern, North Carolina, plant that were quite familiar with custom boats and used them to bring some new features to the 54 without altering the basic Hatteras layout. Some things you just don't mess with," he said, as we continued the conversation. He went on to tell me that the conception and building process was not just limited to the Hatteras Design

below the waterline, as well. According to Bruce Angel, Hatteras' vice president of product development and design engineering, the 54's running bottom is convex from the keel to the chine to help reduce impact accelerations while contributing to a smooth head-sea

ride and minimizing broaching. "We also put in tooled-in spray rails, two per side, to cut down on the spray usually associated with a heavy boat," he said.

Like most boats of her breed, the 54's deadrise diminishes as you go aft to increase lift, improve low-speed handling, and increase transverse stability while on plane. But Hatteras' version is different. "We call it a twisted bottom," Angel said. "It varies from 20 degrees at amidships to about two degrees at the transom." The 54 also has prop tunnels to reduce shaft angle, so the boat draws only 4'2", which comes in handy, especially in the Bahamas, Keys, and on the west coast of Florida. "I've been in places with this boat at dead

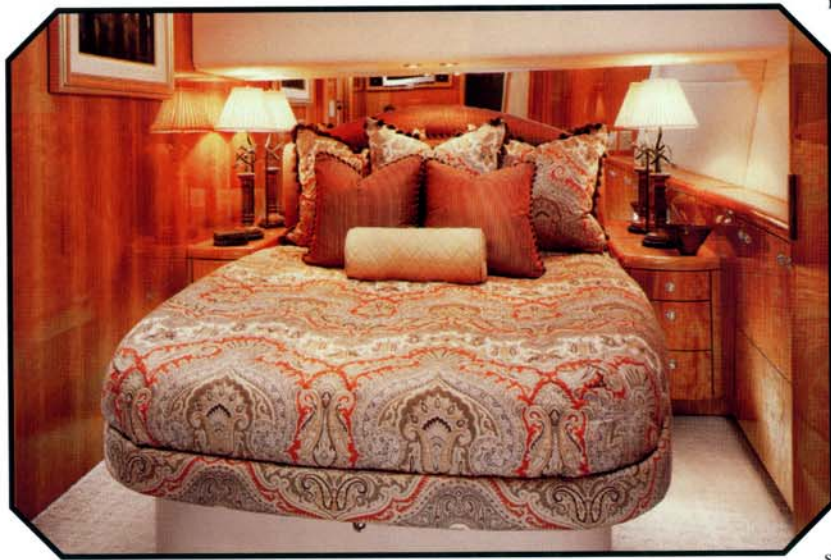
low tide where in the past I'd never been able to bring in a deep-draft boat," recounts Stansel. He also sees this design feature as an idea whose time has come for Hatteras. "I think we've got our 60 at just about 5'1" now," he says.

"We also paid attention to the engine room by accommodating a pair of C30s in the power option," noted Stansel, referring to the new 1,550-hp 30-liter Caterpillar V-12s. The C30 is about three inches shorter than the Caterpillar 1,400-hp 3412E's 81.8-inch length but only 31 pounds heavier. (A pair of 800-hp Caterpillar 3406E diesels is standard.) And as I found during my inspection of the engine room, while not a fully stand-up space, there is more than enough room there to do maintenance as well as access other equipment.

This well-thought-out use of space is also found in other places throughout the boat. For instance, her 149-square-foot cockpit has a 6'6"-long fishbox with macerator, a bait and tackle center with sink and bait freezer, raw- and freshwater washdowns, a chill box under the step leading into the saloon, and a pair of stowage lockers under the port and starboard coamings. "I prefer the transom door setup without the gate," Stansel told me, noting the design reduces the chance of someone going overboard while horsing in a trophy fish, especially in

unfriendly sea conditions.

Stansel holds court from the 150-square-foot flying bridge. A pair of Murray Brothers pedestals provides captain and guest with comfortable seating that affords not only the vistas common to convertibles but, with their positions well aft, allows an unobstructed view of the cockpit and waters to either side. A pair of optional electric teaser reels was in a flush-mounted cabinet in the hardtop above the captain's seat. The pod console has single-lever controls and an optional



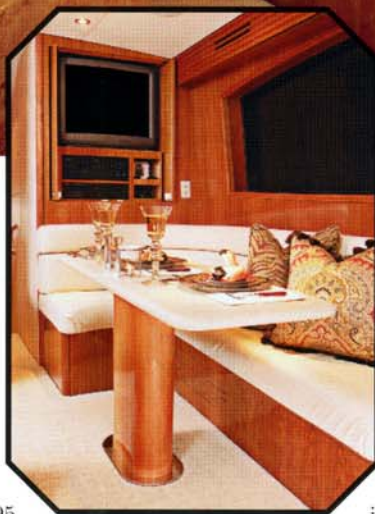
**You'll find lots of room in the en suite head (top). Hatteras built comfort into the 54, as evidenced by the large master suite (above). There's stowage under the berth.**

Team. To make sure they were on the right track with this boat, Stansel and company also sought input from many of their dealers regarding what their customers wanted.

The new features Stansel referred to begin on the outside. While she's unmistakably a Hatteras, the 54 comes at you with a sleeker profile that has more of a rake to the sheer and flare to the bow than previous Hatteras convertibles. Large, elliptical, frameless, smoked-glass windows add to the new look, and there have been changes



**The saloon and galley (above) combine comfort with fine craftsmanship. The dinette (left) has an adjoining entertainment center, a nice feature.**



electrically retractable electronics module that disappears into the console. There's a drink box forward and to port and plenty of seating with stowage space underneath.

But the 54 is more than a tournament-ready fishing machine. She also provides her owners, their guests, and crew with comfortable and well-appointed accommodations. The saloon and galley areas—the galley is forward of the saloon and to port and has a dinette opposite it—offer 195 square feet of space. The saloon has a butter-soft faux leather couch to port with loads of stowage beneath—Stansel keeps 80 and 50 Internationals there—as does the adjoining optional coffee table. The galley is equipped with a four-drawer Sub-Zero refrigerator-freezer, garbage disposal, microwave/convection oven, four-burner stovetop, wide countertops, and cabinet stowage. In addition, there are six 36-inch-wide drawers that should make it easy to provision this boat, and those large, wide windows provide plenty of ambient light as well as afford panoramic views.

Below, the layout consists of three staterooms and two heads. There is an optional two-bunk configuration for the forepeak, but my boat had the more traditional queen centerline berth. These quarters, the side-by-side guest/crew quarters just aft and to starboard, and the master to port all have lots of stowage. In the master I found drawers beneath the berth, a large cedar-lined locker, and a dresser with drawers. The forepeak also has stowage beneath the

berth, a cedar-lined locker, and lockers located above and to either side. The guest/crew quarters has a double-door closet and lockers and under-bunk stowage. With all this stowage you'll never have to wear the same T-shirt twice, but just in case, a standard washer-dryer combo is neatly tucked away in a hallway closet.

Hatteras did not change its construction techniques. Like all Hatterases before her, and most probably all those after her, the 54 has a solid fiberglass bottom with no coring. Nonabsorbent Divinycell PVC foam core is used in the hull sides and superstructure. The engine beds are mounted to steel plates fully encapsulated in fiberglass stringers. According to Hatteras, mounting the engines directly to the fiberglass stringer system helps prevent engine vibration from being transferred to the hull. The topsides are in three parts: bridge, console, and house and deck mold, which includes the cockpit insert, and it all fits together with the hull in a precise, shoebox fit. "We've taken a lot out of the construction process by doing it this way without compromising any strength or integrity," said Stansel. "The fewer parts there are, the stronger the finished product."

So she looks good sitting in the dock, but how did she behave out on the water? My sea trial took place at Hatteras' New Bern facility



**Above left: The business end of the Hatteras 54 is her 149-square-foot cockpit. Above right: Her flying bridge offers a pair of Murray Brothers chairs and an optional electrically operated console.**

on the Neuse River on hull number 15, which was lighter than the prototype by about 5,000 pounds.

The river was just about flat calm, and therefore I could not assess her seakeeping abilities. But I was able to quantify what happened when I put the raw power to that fine-tuned hull design and experienced the boat's adroit handling. It was exhilarating to take this fully loaded machine—74,520 pounds with nearly full fuel, water, and eight persons aboard, including Stansel and Angel—and put her through her paces. I clocked my 54 at an average WOT speed of 38.5 knots, or 44.3 mph. And when I dropped her down to 1750 rpm, I

still had the 54 doing 30.4 knots, 35 mph. At that speed her twin C30s were consuming 80 gph, which translates into a 428-NM range. All in all, these are pretty impressive numbers compared to other convertibles I've been on.

As for her handling, I found her steering to be silky smooth and

highly responsive thanks to the Teleflex hydraulics. At her 2100 rpm cruise speed of 42.7 mph, I noted she tracked straight and true, and when I threw the wheel back and forth into some quick S-turns, she answered the helm quickly. I still felt like I was moving even after we had her tied up at the dock. After being out on a boat like the 54, I guess I still wanted to be.

With her new look and big-power option, coupled with her proven construction and comfortable amenities, the Hatteras 54 seems sure to garner a place among horizon-chasing, offshore battlewagons. In fact, I'll bet she'll be the kind of boat that will often be at the head of the pack instead of merely running with it. ⚙️

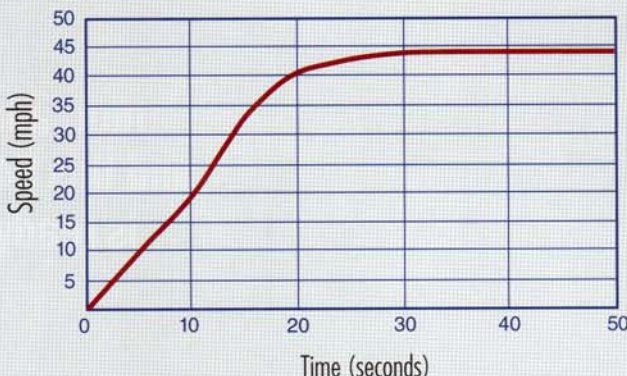
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## pmy tested: Hatteras 54 Convertible

RPM	MPH (KNOTS)	GPH	MPG (NM/GP)	SM RANGE	NM RANGE	DECIBELS	TRIM (DEGREES)
750	11.5 (10.0)	12	0.96 (0.83)	1,078	938	78	1
1000	12.6 (10.9)	28	0.45 (0.39)	504	438	81	4
1250	21.5 (18.7)	42	0.51 (0.45)	576	501	87	5
1500	28.0 (24.3)	60	0.47 (0.41)	524	456	89	6
1750	35.0 (30.4)	80	0.44 (0.38)	492	428	92	5
2000	40.9 (35.5)	106	0.39 (0.34)	434	377	94	5
2100	42.7 (37.1)	116	0.37 (0.32)	414	360	94	5
2320	44.3 (38.5)	156	0.28 (0.25)	319	278	97	4

Conditions: temperature: 39°; humidity: 55%; wind: 10 mph; seas: calm; load: 1,100 gal. fuel, 180 gal. water, 8 persons, 500 lbs. gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/Stalker radar gun. GPH measured with CatVision Electronic Fuel Monitoring System. Range: 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Decibels measured on A scale. 65 dB is the level of normal conversation. All measurements taken with trim tabs fully retracted.



Acceleration based on average of 4 reciprocal runs using Stalker ATS radar gun and OceanPC laptop.

**Base price:** \$1,388,000 with 2/800-hp 3406E Caterpillar diesel inboards

**Optional power:** 2/1,000-hp C18, 2/1,400-hp 3412E, or 2/1,550-hp C30 Caterpillar diesel inboards

**Standard equipment:** 174-kW Onan genset; insulated drink box on flying bridge; adjustable Murray Brothers helmsman and companion seats; Northstar 952XDC GPS/plotter; Icom VHF; Simrad AP22 autopilot and IS15 depth and speed indicators; central vacuum; bait and tackle center; double-size bait freezer; port and starboard stowage lockers; steel mounting plate for fighting chair; Glendinning Cablemaster; U-line ice maker in saloon; Armitco sole in galley

### SPECIFICATIONS

**Length overall:** 54'0"

**Waterline length:** 46'0"

**Beam:** 17'3"

**Draft:** 4'2"

**Weight (dry):** 63,347 lbs.

**Fuel capacity:** 1,250 gal.

**Water capacity:** 180 gal.

**Test engines:** 2/1,550-hp C30 Caterpillar diesel inboards

**Transmissions/ratio:** ZF2150A/2.92:1

**Props:** 39x75 7-blade Nibral

**Steering:** Teleflex hydraulic

**Controls:** Sturdy single-lever electronic

**Optional equipment on test boat:** refrigerated cooler box; power-actuated flying-bridge console; 4/Pompanette wing board rod holders; Murray Brothers fighting chair; full Pipewelders tower

**Price as tested:** \$1,930,350