

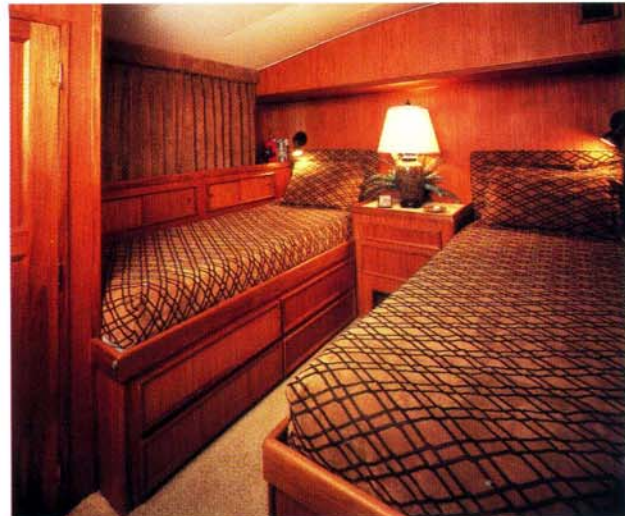
Boat Test No. 293

HATTERAS 55 CONVERTIBLE

She's no seagoing Volkswagen, but for the lucky handful who can own her, she'll be a lot more fun than clipping coupons.

BY JOHN DELVES AND LARRY KEAN





A gamefish's nightmare, *Laurie's* rigged for battle (top). Galley down (far left) gives ballroom-sized saloon, but eliminates one stateroom. Galley up on *Laurie* seemed more practical. (Above) At day's end, the soothing elegance of the master stateroom, like something from *Grand Hotel*.

Four-wheeled convertibles vanished from most American showrooms years ago. They had a habit of being complicated, questionably safe, and generally less versatile than cars that kept their roofs on.

But convertibles that float have never been more popular, and it's easy to understand why: with the dollar shrinking faster than a cheap T-shirt, board chairmen and junior partners alike are demanding a more versatile boat for the dollar. An exquisite fishing machine, if her accommodation looks like an unfinished mobile home, isn't enough. Thus the convertible—a sportfisherman with all the cruising comforts.

Make no mistake: the new Hatteras 55 is no budget way to go fishing, but if you can manage the investment, you'll own an elegant marriage of *grand luxe* cruising and gutsy sportfishing. It's not an easy marriage to bring off well, but on the Hatteras it's done with roses.

Sportfishing: Pure and Simple

Stay out of the interior for a moment. Like all Hatteras vessels we've seen, she's impeccably finished below with such nonstop good taste you'll forget you're on a vessel meant to work. Above decks, she's all business—a marlin's mortal enemy, a boat built to stand among the tournament's finest.

In profile she's a classic sportfisherman: accommodation forward, saloon well back for clear sightlines aft from the bridge, big, low-slung cockpit to keep you down where the fish are. And since the cockpit on any fishing boat is the nerve center, where good design counts as heavily as sharp skills, it's one place to separate serious sportfishermen from those with pretensions.

Form follows function on the 55. She spreads out to nearly 140 square feet of clean cockpit space, with just over two feet of interior freeboard so the coaming doesn't get in the way of the catch. Serious anglers (and who else would be interested?) will spring for Hatteras's optional "bait center" with double sink, deep bait freezer, tackle drawers, and cutting board covers. Any tournament-minded skipper who's going after the gold will want to order it all: the cockpit control station for staying one step ahead of the fish, live bait well in the cockpit sole, and saltwater washdown for sluicing post-contest detritus out the freeing ports. (You get the freshwater washdown in any case.)

Good looks never get in the way of good seakeeping on a Hatteras. A deckshoe-grabbing nonslip covers the entire foredeck, not just the edges, and you

don't have to be a highwire star to go forward—side decks are wide enough for beefy crewmen, proper toe rails keep your feet aboard, her sturdy bow rail is some of the stockiest stainless steel tubing we've seen. Like most companies where quality comes first, Hatteras not only through-bolts the deck hardware, but builds in additional sinew with backing plates to spread the load from each fitting.

That Hargrave Hull

Jack Hargrave, her designer, creates boats that respect the sea. It's a traditional dog-wags-tail approach: first, come up with a solid, deep-sea hull, then fit the accommodation into it. Call it designing from the outside in, or whatever you want, but it's the way to get a boat that can slug it out with the worst the weather can dish out to the offshore tournament fleet.

Example: no sleek, sliding glass patio doors for the cocktail crowd—you enter the saloon through a conventional, sturdy door, up a couple of steps from the cockpit. Neither boarding seas nor bracing hose-downs can soak the saloon broadloom, as can happen without the step-up.

Example: if Murphy and his law get into this engine room, you can get there faster than you can say, "What was *that*?" A companionway from the cockpit leads right in—no lifting hatches or shuffling saloon furniture.

Example: offshore boats use single sideband; experts agree SSB's Achilles' heel is improper grounding particularly on fiberglass boats; so Hatteras molds a large ground screen into the 55's hard-top.

And one more example: the so-called "double chine" hull. It's just that—a hull with two chines or knuckles. The second, top "chine" slaps down spray for a drier boat, and creates a hull shape that's wider for accommodation, narrower for running wetted surface.

Does it work? We fished aboard the 55 off Cape Hatteras, during two days of some of the worst weather ever to beset the Annual Invitational Blue Marlin Tournament. In seas that kept the horizon swinging as wildly as the price of gold in London, and competing boats from getting more than a glimpse of each other behind marching mountains of water, we took a sea aboard only once. Remarkable. And with all fuel and water tanks in or along the keel, the Hatteras is as stable as a church.

More Than the Basics Below

"That certain kind of Peck & Peck woman," of *New Yorker* ad fame, had

poise, good taste, and trendy. She would have been a Hatteras. Ahead of the crowd in recognizing the difference between works and style counts, Hatteras most boats still came. The 55 carries on the steady-as-she-goes sub used heavily throughout the boat. Nylon on the overhead for Joinerwork is first quality. You expect on a boat from the building hub of the United States kind of craftsmanship.

You won't stoop or as befits her size. Head

Major Safety Recommended For This Class

Hatteras 55' C

Item
Bilge blower(s)
Hand bilge pump
Electric bilge pump(s)
Seacocks on through-hull fittings
Nonslip weather decks
Grab rails
Fuel shut-off valves
Grounded fuel system
Battery secured and covered

*This list does not include required equipment but reflects the American Boat & Yacht Council's standards-making body.

six feet in the living space and lockers are in low profile. The owner of a six-figure boat to jam his Top-Siders into each of the three staterooms, two, and each has its own entrance for a crew with the look. It does seem that the unused space over the forward stateroom could be used, but by and large, it's worked hard to make without cutting into elbow room. Each stateroom has 32v and 115v lighting, air from portlights and

If you seldom have over for canapés, the galley, called "galley down" sense. With the dinette low, the saloon is so

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Features by ABYC* s of Boat

Convertible

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But there goes the third stateroom. That leaves you with a 55-footer that sleeps four, and assuming you sign up a skipper and mate for tournament work, you just filled up the boat. We think the optional "galley up" is the way to go, and so, apparently, does Hatteras: our test boat, *Laurie*, showboat of the 55 fleet, was so arranged. Of course with three staterooms (each with head), the boat sleeps more people than the dinette seats, but on many sportfishermen you don't get a dinette at all.

To be complete, her galley needs just one thing more: a serious cook. Bring on your woks, whisks, and *bouquets garnis*—there's enough room for two to work, with well above average counter space and stowage. Given all that, plus a three-burner range with oven, refrigerator/freezer, and optional microwave, you can snack on Stouffer's warm-ups during tournaments, or mount a six-course spread on the cruising circuit.

Endless Engineering

Boatmen who are prepared to plunk down nearly half-a-million (*Laurie*'s list price, as equipped) have a right to expect careful—maybe even compulsive—attention to detail. It's here. Try to find a better electrical system on any production boat. The wiring itself is neater than most wiring diagrams, tie-wrapped every three or four inches instead of the eighteen inches the Coast Guard requires. An isolation transformer keeps shorelines out of trouble, and a.c. circuit receptacles are protected by a ground fault interrupter system that goes dead at the first sign of even tiny current leakage. Delay mechanisms in the boat's powerful air-conditioning system prevent all four compressors from coming on at once with a circuit-breaking surge.

The engine room, too, is a showplace. Sanded, painted, and brightly lighted, it's the very model of a modern machinery space: fuel valves labeled, air intakes recessed under cockpit gunwales so nothing but clean, dry air reaches the big diesels, optional push-button oil change system for engines and generators, fresh water fill hoses for the engines' expansion tanks—the elegance of expensive machinery, treated the way it deserves.

Her big 12-V71TI's are available with conventional or large injectors, and Hatteras has tried it both ways. With the standard power plants, she rips along at 28.7 mph top, 25.2 cruise. Those large injectors will give her lots

more horsepower, but they pour in about 25 percent more fuel to do it. So you can tear up the tournaments and damn the expense with them if you want, but Hatteras is betting on the standard—and more conservative—power.

Construction—Superb

The 55 Convertible's shapely hull is molded, by the hand layup method, with a combination of fiberglass mat and Fabmat (a combination of mat and woven roving) bonded together with quick curing polyester resin. It seems like a minor miracle that soft fabrics can be formed into a sturdy structural entity—in effect, it's like starching a collar. With the combination of fiberglass materials, the bottom of the 55 measures .58"—husky.

To take the pounding of the seas and the racking of a pair of 5200 pound engines, her bottom is stiffened with four foam-filled, hat-section, fiberglass longitudinal upon which the aforementioned engines sit.

The saloon is so large you could host the entire yacht club board of governors.

And how they sit on the stringers distinguishes Hatteras quality from most other production boatbuilders. In way of the engine locations, metal plates are glassed to the underside of the stringers and drilled and tapped for welded aluminum engine beds (see photograph)—no casually glassed-in wooden beds for Hatteras! Construction and detailing throughout the 55' Convertible is first class.

Who'll buy this boat, instead of, say, a house in the city, a house in the country, and his and hers Porsches for about the same money? The tournament fisherman and his cruising wife who've owned three or four sportfishermen, and are ready for quality without question. The skipper who wants a bridge that looks as big as a handball court, a hull bright with Imron luster that will stay that way for years with nothing more than a soapy sponge, a boat with the bugs already gone.

And—oh yes—those smart people who've caught on to the fact that at any speed, on the used-boat market Hatteras boats usually outperform the inflation rate. And they're a lot more fun than a stock certificate.

HATTERAS 55 CONVERTIBLE SPECIFICATIONS

Dimensions:

Overall length 55' 8" (16.97 m)
 Waterline length 50' 2" (15.27 m)
 Beam 17' 6" (5.33 m)
 Draft 4' 10" (1.47 m)
 Freeboard forward 7' 4" (2.23 m)
 Freeboard aft 3' 5" (1.04 m)
 Bridge clearance* 16' 8" (5.08 m)
 Cabin headroom 6' 6" (1.98 m)

*Waterline to top of flying bridge windscreen.

Hull Form: Modified V-bottom with full length inset (double) chines and modest deadrise at transom.

Displacement: 68,000 lbs (30,845 kg).

Accommodations: Galley down arrangement sleeps four in two cabins, each with adjacent head. Galley up arrangement sleeps six in three cabins, each with own head. Both models have dinette and fully equipped galley with 115v refrigerator/freezer, four-burner 240v range (three-burner on galley up version).

Standard Equipment: Complete International Rule navigation lights; dual air horn; fog bell; life ring; 6 life jackets; engine space fire extinguisher system; five 2½ lb portable fire extinguishers; engine compartment ventilation complies with current Coast Guard standards; 3 electric and 1 manual bilge pump; 2 bilge blowers; 60 lb Danforth Hi-Tensile anchor with anchor line; six ¾" dia x 57' nylon docking lines; boat hook; bow and stern staffs with pennant and ensign; chrome over brass or s.s. deck hardware includes two 15" mooring cleats, twin bow chocks for 1½" line, two 12" spring cleats p & s, twin 12" quarter cleats, and four hawse pipes in covering board—all through-bolted; s.s. bow rail and flying bridge rails; s.s. and teak flying bridge ladder; 23" x 23" screened hatch over forward cabin; 15" x 15½" screened hatches over guest and master cabins; Fuller acrylic ports in hull; aluminum-framed safety glass windscreen and

saloon windows; aluminum-framed safety glass flying bridge windscreen with 3 wipers and washers; flying bridge console with 18" dia s.s. Navy type steering wheel; Hynautic hydraulic steering system; Morse double lever controls; 5" Danforth or Richie compass; usual array of instruments and gauges; 32v ship's service electrical system; 2 banks of 32v heavy duty batteries with automatic charger; battery paralleling system; two 230v shore power connectors; one 115v shore power connector; magnetic circuit breakers on all electrical circuits; 20 kw diesel generator; engine alarm system; SSB radio ground screen in hardtop; radio ground plates; air conditioning/heating; 1285 gal capacity fiberglass fuel tanks; 380 gal freshwater capacity; holding tanks piped for dockside discharge; hot and cold pressure water system; trim tabs; nonslip weather decks.

Construction: Molded fiberglass hull, deck/superstructure, hardtop, and flying bridge—hand lay-up of fiberglass mat and Fabmat. Seven-ply basic hull bottom, average thickness .58" (one ply 1½ oz mat plus six plies of 24/15 Fabmat). Five-ply topsides, average thickness .404" (one ply 1½ oz mat plus four plies of 24/15 Fabmat). Hull bottom stiffened with four foam filled hat section fiberglass longitudinal stringers which do double duty as engine beds.

Price: With above equipment and twin 650 hp Detroit Diesel Allison 12V-71TI engines, \$383,700, FOB plant. Test boat with a long list of options including standby 20 kw diesel generator, galley up arrangement, electronics, pulpit, windlass, etc., had a retail value of \$477,370, FOB plant.

Designer: Jack Hargrave and Hatteras Yachts.

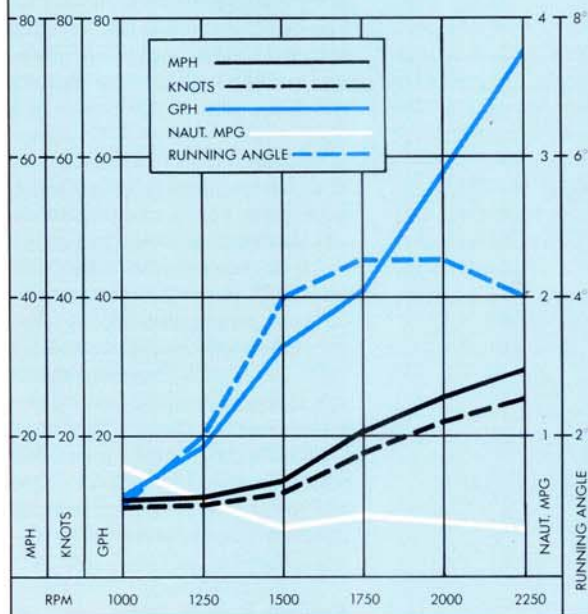
Builder: AMF Hatteras Yachts, Dept. B, 2100 Kivett Dr., High Point, N.C. 27261

PERFORMANCE CURVES

HATTERAS 55' CONVERTIBLE

TWIN 650 hp DETROIT DIESEL ALLISON ENGINES

32" x 33" FOUR-BLADED PROPELLERS



PROPULSION and PERFORMANCE

Standard Power: Twin 650 hp Detroit Diesel Allison 12V-71TI engines with 852 cu in displacement; 4.25" bore x 5.00" stroke; 2:1 reduction gear.

Performance:

rpm	knots	mph	gph	nautal mpg	statute mpg	*cruising range, nautical miles	*cruising range, statute miles	running angle
1000	9.1	10.5	11.6	.78	.91	928	1083	1.0°
1250	9.5	11.0	18.6	.51	.59	607	702	2.0°
1500	11.3	13.0	33.0	.34	.40	405	476	4.0°
1750	17.5	20.2	40.6	.43	.50	512	595	4.5°
2000	21.9	25.2	57.4	.38	.44	452	524	4.5°
2250	24.9	28.7	74.8	.33	.38	393	452	4.0°

*Cruising range based on estimated 1190 gals available from 1250 gal tankage.

Speeds based on radar gun readings with three persons aboard, half fuel load, and no water or cruising gear.



Welded aluminum engine mounts straddle glass stringers.

