MB0706Rnkr_lr_shp2 6/12/06 9:15 AM Page 28

powertrip

Who says sterndrives are for boats under 40 feet? A pair of Mercs prove their muscle on the Rinker 420 Express.

By **Capt. Stuart Reininger**

RINKER 420

SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE (AS TESTED): $451,167
LOA: 44'6"
BEAM: 13'10"
FUEL: 300 gals.
TEST POWER: (2) 425-hp MerCruiser 496 Mag HO gasoline sterndrives.

PERFORMANCE

RPM	MPH	KNOTS	DB-A
1000	6.1	5.3	69
2000	10.7	9.3	76
2500	11.6	10.0	85
3000	19.8	17.2	82
3500	30.3	26.3	83
4000	37.5	32.6	87
4500	43.0	37.4	88
5000	44.4	38.6	89

Speeds measured by GPS on the South River near Edgewater, Md., w/three adults aboard, 200 gals. fuel and no water. Sound levels measured at the helm in dB-A.

Rinker Boats
www.rinkerboats.com

MB0706Rnkr_lr_shp2 6/12/06 9:15 AM Page 30





ALL-AROUND FUN: The 420 handles easily at the helm (left) and has a big salon with convertible settee.

IT'S RARE TO FIND STERNDRIVES ON A BOAT over 40 feet. Rinker's newest flagship, the 420 Express, is the largest production model I know of that's powered by I/Os. This is an interesting choice for Rinker, which is among the more conservative builders in the U.S. Yet the company took a long, hard look at this big, beamy cruiser before making its decision to install two MerCruiser 496 Mag HO gas engines.

The 420 is designed for a boater with experience under his belt, but it's also an appropriate choice for a skipper with less sea time who's moving up from a smaller boat. The easy-maneuvering sterndrives, combined with the optional bowthruster on the 420, could seem less intimidating than an inboard to this person. Sterndrives are great in shallow water, too, where you can trim up. You also have the option to trim constantly under way to maintain peak efficiency.

Because the engines on the Rinker are gas, the retail cost of the boat is as appealing as its handling. Some cruisers in this size range sport diesels because they're so fuel-efficient, but the new, electronically monitored sterndrives are more fuel-miserly than their predecessors, yet still less expensive than diesels.

What's the disadvantage of sterndrives on a boat this size? Some would say outdrives, which are constantly immersed in water and continually corroding, but that's changing as technology improves. Mercury's new Sea-Core outdrives—the 420 is among the first boats to sport them—have anodized components and a five-year warranty.

Sterndrives aren't perfect. There are reasons why many boats in this size range are powered by inboards. With props set at a deeper angle, inboards have a better bite and can be more efficient, especially offshore. Plus, props can be matched to a particular engine, with pitch and diameter tweaked to improve efficiency even more. If you're a fan of inboards, don't write off the 420 just yet. This model is available with gas and diesel inboards, including Volvo Penta's IPS.

Sea-trialing the 420 was a pleasure. The boat got up onto plane in less than 10 seconds with minimal bowrise and good visibility. It tracked well and spun on its heels like a sportboat. The power steering was smooth at all times. That's not always the case with an inboard-powered boat, which tends to stiffen in high-speed turns. To make driving even more pleasant, you can synchronize the twin I/Os. Just throw a switch and both engines operate off one throttle. I like this feature, which is more often seen on diesel-powered boats.

Rinker is one of the largest production builders in the country, and that experience is evident throughout the 420. The massive stern platform, for instance, is notched for a set of custom dinghy davits, and there are sockets for the legs of a barbecue grill. Transom stowage will house standard equipment like the twin shore cords with split adapters. There's also a molded-in recess for the dinghy's outboard. A molded bench on the transom serves as a delightful place to sit and watch swimmers.

At the bow, the standard Lewmar 900 windlass is in its own self-draining hatch—the unit is helm-operated on this boat, but subsequent hulls will have deck switches, too. Also standard is the ground tackle, complete with the snag-free plaited nylon line. The stainless, welded bowrail is about waist high and handholds are always within reach. The foredeck sun lounge adjusts to a sitting position.

At the helm, the skipper has his own swiveling bolster seat; a double-bench for guests is to port and there's plenty of seating aft for the rest of the crowd. For access forward from the helm, there's a step with rail that leads to the walk-through windshield. You can go forward from the sidedecks, too, which is one of the nice things about an express cruiser in this size range. Smaller express models typically offer just one route forward.

As for cockpit appointments, the 420 has a refrigerator, icemaker, sink and trash compactor. I could live above-decks on this boat without ever going below. Did I mention the drop-down DVD player that's stowed up in the hardtop? How about the blender that's concealed under a counter at the wet bar—it flips up at cocktail hour.

The 420 couples pleasing comforts with performance that will rock the socks off a testosterone-laced teen. In that sense, the 420 works for the whole family. ↘

HOT

1. Standard Bravo Three XR performance props add a competitive edge.
2. Unusually large engine compartment includes tub stowage for gear.
3. Four-rung ladder is easy to deploy by a swimmer.
4. Good-looking and hefty hardtop supports ensure vibration-free running.

NOT

1. Oil needs to be manually pumped to be changed.
2. Sand-type nonskid could make decks slick when awash.
3. The spotlight mounted on the bowrail can be sucker-punched by an errant line or bad docking.

PEER GROUP

REGAL 44



■■■ At a base price of $425,825 with twin 420-hp MerCruiser V-drives, this spacious express includes standard A/C and a hand-crafted cherry interior.

SEA RAY 44



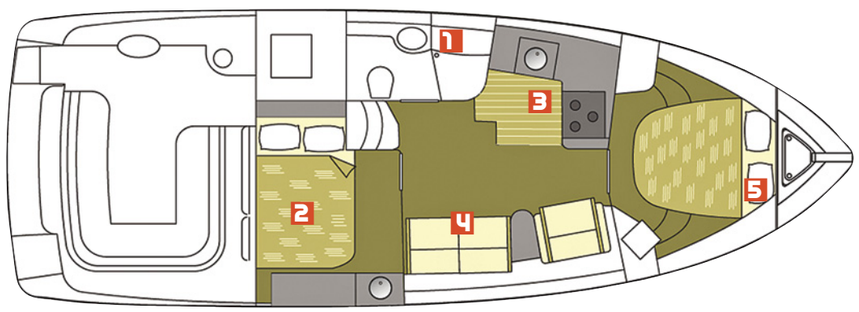
■■■ This handsome, well-appointed express with twin 370-hp MerCruiser V-drives retails for $481,136, and that includes a salon skylight with a retractable sunshade.

CRUISERS 40



■■■ At $375,510 with twin 370-hp MerCruiser V-drives, this sleek cruiser comes equipped with some high-end standards like a hardtop, A/C and genset.

THE LAYOUT: RINKER 42 EXPRESS



1 The teak-grated head has an enclosed, stand-up shower compartment and hidden washer/dryer. 2 The aft cabin allows for an athwartships double berth. 3 The galley's full-size oven and three burners are unusual on a boat this size. 4 The Ultraleather-covered salon settee opens to a double bunk; note the adjacent recliner. 5 The master stateroom includes solid cherry doors for two cedar-lined hanging lockers.