

Hot New Fishboats

By Lenny Rudow



GRADY-WHITE FREEDOM 235 ROOM TO ROAM

Dual console boats work well for Bay anglers for a number of reasons, but one of the biggest is that they give you both forward and aft cockpits to cast from. Cabin boats limit you to the rear end of the boat. And while center console fishing boats have an edge in 360-degree fishability, DCs have more protection – so they make a lot of sense for family anglers, in particular. So, how do you take those forward and aft cockpits and make them even better? Make them bigger. That's the tactic Grady-White took with their Freedom 235, when they replaced the Freedom 225. Beam was increased from 8'0" to 8'6" which not only makes for more fishing room, but also allows for a larger head compartment in

the passenger's side console. Trimming the gunwales and pushing out the inwales increases interior volume even more, and when all is said and done, the Freedom 235 feels like a significantly larger boat than the 225 did.

Okay, so the boat feels roomy for its size. Big deal. In what ways will it boost your fishing prowess? First off, the basic features we all need are present and accounted for. There's a 160-quart insulated fishbox in the transom, another fishbox up forward, four standard rodholders, six under-gunwale rodracks, cockpit toe rails, a 20-gallon freshwater washdown, and a pair of tackleboxes in the starboard console door. Get the hard top, and you'll get four more rod holders along with it. A nifty bonus feature is the aft anchor locker in the swim platform. You can use it to stow whatever you'd like, of course, but those of us who like to haul a second anchor for pinpoint positioning over wrecks or reefs will particularly appreciate it. One beef: the 15.5-gallon livewell in the transom is considered an option, and we'd consider that a must-have.

With an F300 Yamaha four-stroke on the transom, the Freedom 235 offers performance that should put a smile on any Chesapeake dweller's face. Cruise is in

the mid-30s and top-end breaks 46 mph. Fuel economy at most efficient cruise is a surprise – if you can force yourself to cruise at just 3600 rpm. Do so, and you'll get an eyebrow-raising four miles to the gallon while travelling at almost 30 mph.

We're not going to dive into a conversation about the boat's construction, because any sentient being who can sling a jig has surely heard about how well Gradys are put together (8 – count 'em, 8 – consecutive JD Powers and Associates customer satisfaction awards pretty much tell that story). But we do want to call out a few particulars we noticed that stand out on this boat. The head compartment, for example, has a composite cherry and holly decking. The swim platform extends aft all the way to the back of the outboard. Cleats are flush-mounted pop-ups, all deck hardware is through-bolted stainless-steel, and auto-retracting hydraulic trim tabs with indicators are standard-issue. Nice.

Mind you, the Grady-White Freedom 235 isn't cheap. That comes back to you in the long run since Gradys also maintain their resale value far better than most boats, but it could prove an impediment to some potential buyers. That said, just try to find another reason not to buy this boat. We dare ya.

QUICK FACTS

LOA: 25'7"

Beam: 8'6"

Displacement: 4050 lbs.

Draft (hull): 1'8"

Transom Deadrise: 20

Fuel Capacity: 115 gal.

Freshwater Capacity: 20 gal.

AREA DEALERS

Tri-State Marine, Deale, MD
(410) 867-1447 tristatemarine.com

Taylor Marine Center, Milford, DE
(302) 422-9177 taylormarinecenter.com

Norfolk Marine, Norfolk, VA
(757) 461-3391 norfolkmarine.com

Southeastern Marine, Richmond, VA
(804) 226-1111 southeasternmarine.net