

BAJA 38 SPECIAL



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hat's not to like? It's big and beautiful, and it runs like a bullet train. Baja has been at the cutting edge of fast and civilized offshore boats for more than a decade. But when it introduced the 38 Special in 1993, it was really on to something special. Not only did this model break new ground in terms of exterior styling and graphics, it also combined true luxury with genuine performance.

Although this particular outing was purely a performance run-through, you can't help but be impressed with Baja's attention to detail and its ability to pack creature comforts into a boat that's going to do 70-plus mph when you put the hammer down. For those of you who have never seen a 38 Special in person, take our word

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MICHIGAN TEST SERIES

Two speedsters face off in the Great Lakes State.

BY BOB BROWN

SUNSATION 32' DOMINATOR

Whenever we head back East for some hands-on performance runs, we always call ahead and check in with the Schaldenbrand brothers to see if Sunsation has something in which our readers might be interested. And they never disappoint us.

This time it was Sunsation's largest model, the 32-foot Dominator, that was muscled up with some new MerCruiser power and ready for some full-throttle exercise on the always challenging Lake Michigan. For those HOT BOAT readers with very good memories, we originally reported testing the Sunsation 32-foot Dominator in the March 1994 issue with a pair of carbureted 502s (approximately 390 propshaft horsepower each). In this

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outing, the choice of power was a couple of MerCruiser's new 500-hp 502s (not Bulldogs), and to be perfectly honest, it was just more of the same and faster.

It's no secret, ever since we first tested the 32-foot Dominator nearly two years ago, our entire test crew gave it an unqualified two thumbs up for its overall performance. Although SunSation is not one of the big-name offshore boat-builders, the people there take just as much pride in their quality and construction as anyone in the industry. When you review their lamination schedule, which includes ample amounts of balsa core wrapped in five layers of U-ounce mat plus core mat and 34- and 18-ounce Kytex biaxial glass, you understand why this hull is among the stoutest in the offshore clan.



And even better, at only 6,200 pounds, it's no heavyweight.

As for running surface, the 32 Dominator has approximately 30 feet of bottom; the other two feet is accounted for by the integral swim platform. Hull deadrise is a generous 24 degrees. The difference is the last several feet of the hull at the transom. The keel flattens into a delta pad that is approximately 18 inches at the stem. This flat pad defi-

nately helps high-speed stability and makes getting on plane effortless. Although traditionalists scowl at pads on deep-

vees because, they claim, they adversely affect rough-water capabilities, we haven't experienced any negative results with the Dominator.

Here are the all-important numbers with a pair of 1.5:1 Bravo One drives swinging a set of 27-pitch Mirage props: zero to plane was right at four seconds, very quick indeed. At 3,000 rpm, the radar indicated a 43-mph cruise.

Another 1,000 rpm increase, and the speed jumped to a very brisk 61 mph. At 5,000 rpm, both the radar and the speedo were flirting with 80 mph. The final 200 rpm (top recorded rpm was 5,200) nursed a radar reading of 82 to 83 mph, which was remarkably well mannered.

What's best about SunSation's 32-foot Dominator

is that it is a "feel" boat. You don't have to be constantly looking at your drive trim gauge or your trim tab indicators to know when the boat is running right. It tells you that automatically once you've become accustomed to driving it. The Dominator likes to run loose and air out. Tucking in the drives and hitting the down button on the trim tabs takes all the fun out of the boat.

Comparing this late 1995 model 32 Dominator with the late 1993 version we tested originally, the hulls seemed identical except for the additional power of the 500-hp MerCruiser options. The extra 100 hp per engine was worth about seven to eight more mph on the top end. Now it's your call. Does the additional speed justify the larger dollar investment? If you've got it to spend, go for it, but don't forget that the 32-foot Dominator is still a spectacular performer with just about any engine package you select.

RPM	Radar Speed
2,000	20 mph
3,000	43 mph
4,000	61 mph
5,000	80 mph
5,200 (WOT)	83 mph

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