

SUNSATLON 32 DOMINATOR

# RIGHT ON COURSE

WITH TWIN MERCURY RACING HP500EFI MOTORS AND FULLY HYDRAULIC STEERING, THE SUNSATLON 32 DOMINATOR IS THE BOAT WE ALWAYS KNEW IT COULD BE.

**C**ALL OUR LATEST ENCOUNTER WITH the Sunsation 32 Dominator "Deja New." Sure enough, we'd already seen and tested the 32'-long, 8'-wide offering a few times since it was introduced in March 1993. We've appreciated the boat's performance, especially for the price, but we always knew that it was capable of more. It just needed the right setup.

Consider it done. With fully hydraulic steering and twin 470-hp fuel-injected engines from Mercury Racing, the 32 Dominator delivered dazzling performance in the waters off Captiva Island, Fla.

Base price for the 32 Dominator with a pair of MerCruiser MX 6.2 MPI small-block motors is \$101,185, a relative steal by offshore-boat standards. With the power and steering upgrades, as well as other options such as a McLeod cockpit, the boat had a \$167,699 sticker.

## PERFORMANCE

The first version of the 32 Dominator didn't have a stepped bottom. What the Sunsation people have dubbed the Vortex step came in a later incarnation and remained. Our test boat had that single step, a delta-pad keel and four strakes. The inner strakes ended roughly 8 feet forward of the transom, and the outer strakes ran the length of the hull. chines were flat and roughly 3 inches wide.

In prior tests of the 32 Dominator, we'd given its handling a good rating. The addition of fully hydraulic steering boosted those ratings to excellent. The 32-footer had the feel and ride of



a bigger boat, and it had the nimble agility of a smaller one. With our lead test driver at the helm, it leaned into slalom turns at 30, 40 and 50 mph and transitioned from side to side without washing or swaying. Not once did it do anything unpredictable. Hats off to the designers at Sunsation for creating a stepped bottom that doesn't require an expert to drive aggressively.

Tracking at all speeds was arrow-straight. In head-on and quartering seas, the 32 Dominator continued its "bigger-than-life" feel. It did tend to fly the nose in following seas, however a little input from the Mercury 280S K-planes was all it took to settle down the boat. Even in 1- to 3-footers on test day, rattles, squeaks and groans were absent.

Top speed for the 32 Dominator was 84.9 mph at 5,300 rpm.

### HULL INFORMATION

Deadrise at transom	24 degrees
Centerline	32'
Beam	8'
Hull weight	6,500 pounds

### PRICING INFORMATION

Base retail	\$101,185
Price as tested	\$167,699

### ENGINE & PROPELLERS

Engine	(2) Mercury Racing HP500EFI
Cylinder type	V-8
Cubic-inch displacement/horsepower	502/470
Lower-unit gear ratio	1.5:1
Propeller	Mercury Bravo One 15 1/4" x 30"

### STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Stand-up bolsters, stainless grab handles, integrated swim platform, through-bolted cleats, cockpit cover, dual batteries, triple automatic bilge pumps, stainless propellers, locking acrylic cabin door, dual-ram Bennett trim tabs, hydraulic hatch lift, stainless-steel tiebar, Vortex stepped hull, custom graphics, race faring, courtesy/nav lights, stainless gas cap, five-year hull warranty, one-year component warranty, pump-out head, Gaffrig instruments, Zero Effort controls, circuit breakers, solid-filled lifting strakes, glass-encapsulated full-length stringers.

### OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT

Upgrade to HP500EFI engines (\$46,792), hydraulic steering (\$5,886), race graphics (\$5,000), McLeod cockpit (\$4,455), 280S K-Planes with indicators (\$1,789), 4-inch stainless angled tips (\$643), raised colored bezels (\$489), depthfinder (\$446), halon automatic extinguisher (\$363), drive shower (\$389), internal engine flush (\$288).

### ACCELERATION

5 seconds	48 mph
10 seconds	75 mph
15 seconds	79 mph
20 seconds	84 mph

### MIDRANGE ACCELERATION

30-50 mph	3.8 seconds
40-60 mph	3.8 seconds
40-70 mph	6.2 seconds

### RPM VS. MPH

1000	.8 mph
1500	.12 mph
2000	.25 mph
2500	.42 mph
3000	.52 mph
3500	.59 mph
4000	.65 mph
4500	.77 mph
5000	.82 mph

### TOP SPEED AT RPM

Speedometer	.88 mph
Radar	84.9 mph at 5300
Nordskog Performance Products GPS	83.6 mph

### PLANING

Time to plane	3.3 seconds
Minimum planing speed	20 mph

### FUEL ECONOMY

At 45 mph	1.6 mpg
At 55 mph	1.5 mpg
At 65 mph	1.4 mpg
At WOT	1 mpg

### FUEL CAPACITY

110 gallons

### TEST CONDUCTED AT

Captiva Island, Fla.

### MANUFACTURER

Sunsation Powerboats, Dept. PB, 9666 Kretz Drive, Algonac, MI 48001, (810) 794-4888, www.sunsation-boats.com.

More important still was how the boat felt—solid and stable—at that speed. Channeling the combined 940 horsepower to the water were Bravo One drives twirling Mercury Bravo One 15 1/4" x 30" four-blade stainless-steel propellers through a 1.5:1 reduction.

Midrange acceleration numbers were among the best we saw during our 2001 Performance Trials. The 32 Dominator rocketed from 30 to 50 mph in 3.7 seconds, 40 to 60 mph in 3.8 seconds and 40 to 70 mph in 6.2 seconds. Clearly, the engines delivered power consistently and impressively throughout their operating range.

## WORKMANSHIP

Graphics on the 32 Dominator were cleanly applied over the boat's white gelcoat in BASF paint made more lustrous by a layer of Clearcote. Mold work was smooth and protected by an offshore-style rubrail with a rubber insert.

Lamination materials for the hand-laid model included Neste ISO gelcoat, 1 1/2-ounce mat, 24-ounce mat, 2mm Coremat and premium resin. Batek 3/4-inch-thick balsa coring was used in the deck and hull bottom, and Batek 1/2-inch-thick balsa coring was used in the hullsides. All stringers were precoated with A.O.C. premium resin and encapsulated in two layers of 1708 Knytex. All strakes were filled with putty for extra strength. To bond together the hull and deck, the manufacturer used 3408 Knytex.

With the engine hatch raised by a hydraulic ram, we had great access to the twin fuel-injected motors. First thing we noticed? Lots of working space for a twin big-block engine installation in a 32-footer. The engines themselves were installed on L-angles through-bolted to the stringers. All wiring was protected in conduit and supported by nylon cushion clamps.

## INTERIOR

Sunsation covered the basics in the 32 Dominator's cabin. Accommodations

included a V-berth and facing lounges upholstered in white vinyl. Underneath a hinged section of the berth was a Porta Potti in its own locker, as well as other stowage lockers with plexiglass lids. A filler cushion transformed the two lounges into a single U-shape lounge. In the galley area was a sink, a cabinet and two cupholders.

Stepping through open acrylic doors to the cockpit, our inspectors found the highlight of the boat's interior—two McLeod bolsters with power drop-out bottoms. The rear bench and sunpad were also McLeod creations. About the only McLeod products "missing" were power footrests—and, naturally, they were available as an option.

The co-pilot's station to port offered few distractions, always a good thing. It included a Sony CD stereo, as well as a stainless-steel grab handle.

All gauges at the helm to starboard were set in purple bezels and unobstructed by the steering wheel. Mechanical trim-level indicators were provided for the drives and tabs, both of which were controlled by rocker switches, as were the rest of the boat's accessories. Mercury Zero Effort throttles and shifters were installed on the starboard gunwale.

## OVERALL

We knew from previous tests that the 32 Dominator was a good boat. A couple of significant upgrades, a superior steering system and excellent power made it a great one. We can't wait to see what's next.

### WORTH NOTING

✓ We've long been vocal proponents of fully hydraulic steering on high-performance boats. It's not just safer. It works better, as the 32 Dominator proved.

✓ There is a difference between fast and quick. A top speed of 84.9 mph is fast. A time to plane of 3.2 seconds is quick. The 32 Dominator delivered both, as well as rocket-like midrange punch.