

SEATRIAL

BY ROGER MCAFEE



TIARA 44 COUPE

**NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S TIARA
— OR EVEN YOUR FATHER'S**

The family that owns Tiara, the Slikkers, has been building boats since the early 1950s — more than six decades. The builder started experimenting with fiberglass in 1955, making it one of the first U.S. builders to tinker in that medium as a possible boat-building material, and by 1963, the family had ceased building in wood. The family also built, at various times during its history, under the Slickcraft, S2 (sailboats) and Pursuit marques.

The Michigan-based company has a full order book for its 44 Coupe — our test boat. In fact, the 44 was awarded the AIM Editor's Choice award as the best powerboat in the 40- to 50-foot category at the 2014 Ft. Lauderdale International Boat Show.

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

The new 44 hull is based on Tiara's 39 Open series, which has earned a well-deserved reputation among fishermen and other boaters who want to spend a day on the water while enjoy-

ing a stable, high-speed, comfortable ride. The 44 has a sharp entry, ideal for plowing into a sloppy chop, traditional bottom strakes and a hull modified slightly to accept the Volvo pod drives.

The Coupe is hand-laid glass, with a solid bottom and balsa-cored hull sides, deck and upper works. Hull stringers are wood-skinned foam cores that are bonded into the hull bottom. The interior is built as a single unit, outside the hull assembly, and then installed and glassed into the hull. The construction method makes for a

more solid build than the traditional stick build method and adds structural strength and rigidity without adding extra weight.

FANTASTIC FEATURES

The 44 Coupe follows the design path of many others in the current crop of new recreational vessels — an almost seamless transition from the deckhouse onto the aft deck or into the cockpit. Sliding glass doors present a wall of glass that, when stowed during good weather, will enable at least a dozen people to comfortably gather for drinks or a buffet. The glass wall, which replaces the traditional type of deckhouse aft bulkhead, allows the deckhouse to be flooded with natural light that makes the interior seem warm and cozy, even on dreary days.

A substantial swim platform, featuring a built-in grill, creates even more entertaining space. The 44 Coupe's foredeck has a comfortable, secure space for sunpads, to cater to sun



The interior of the Tiara 44 Coupe features a solid teak sole throughout, which contrasts nicely with the muted gray and beige tones of the furniture, headers and counters. A large sunroof and windows all around ensure a bright interior.

worshippers. Getting forward to the sunpads is quick and easy along fairly wide sidedecks using solid hand- and guardrails.

The anchor and its windlass are neatly tucked away under a covered anchor hatch. The anchor and roller are secured in a hawsepipe in the bow. The hull is protected against anchor contact by a large stainless plate, and the bow roller is set in place so the anchor is always recovered right side up. This system removes the requirement for a bowsprit, and with most marinas charging moorage based on overall length, it's a money saver. The anchor hatch cover itself is set on adjustable rubber feet, so there is no rattling or "give" in the cover when it is stepped on.

The cockpit has a long settee, a fixed table and two aft-facing chairs. Synthetic sisal carpeting provides good footing and drains quickly. Our

test boat was equipped with an electric awning that stows in the aft brow of the overhead and covers the entire cockpit when deployed, a feature that is becoming more prevalent in modern, up-to-date vessels. It protects people on the aft deck from light rain and is excellent sun protection while cruising in hot weather.

INTERIOR

The interior of the coupe is fairly traditional, with a galley along the starboard side and a port-side settee and table. The galley has a two-burner cooktop with a convection microwave underneath, a drawer-style refrigerator and freezer, and a deep stainless sink. A vertical drawer provides space for a garbage can and stowage for recyclables. The entertainment center lives in a cupboard above the cooktop, and a door at the forward end of the cabinet stows a pullout flat-screen TV. A thick

glass plate protects the entertainment center from the cooktop.

Forward of the galley is the helm station, which features an electrically adjusted double helm seat with an adjacent sliding glass window for ventilation. The dash itself is large enough to house a pair of good-sized multifunction displays. A massive sunroof allows plenty of light and ventilation and is air pressure-actuated, so it opens and closes very quietly and quickly. The port-side settee is a step up, which allows for excellent visibility and provides better headroom in the guest stateroom below.

The flooring throughout the deckhouse is solid teak, which contrasts nicely with the muted tones of the Ultraleather settees and a fog-gray interior. The 44 Coupe's tones, and other similar almost neutral colors, are becoming more prevalent in many new marine offerings, because the



tones lend themselves nicely to colorful throw cushions, photos and other wall art.

SLEEP WELL

The accommodations and both heads are below, with the master in the bow and the guest stateroom aft, under the salon. The master boasts an island queen bed, an overhead hatch and opening portholes to port and starboard. There's plenty of storage, including a good-sized hanging locker. The dedicated head contains a vanity, a sink, a VacuFlush toilet and a separate glass-door shower stall.

The guest stateroom, partially under the salon with good headroom at its entrance, includes a skylight to the salon above. There's a small but comfortable seating/changing area, and the twin berths can be combined into a queen. The guest head, while on the small side, doubles as the vessel's day head. There's plenty of drawer and hanging locker space in the guest stateroom.

Stainless formed handrails are placed throughout the vessel, something not always found on vessels of this size. It's clear the Tiara designers have a lot of on-water experience and know handrails are a great safety feature. However, the bottom of these rails have some sharp edges that should be dealt with.

UNDERWAY

The engines fired up quickly and cleanly, without smoke, clatter or hunting. With joystick precision, our skipper threaded his way through the very crowded marina. The vessel handled very well at slow speed in close quarters, a characteristic that is becoming more important as marinas become increasingly crowded. The vessel was very quiet as we eased our way to open water. Our decibel meter read 68.

Once we cleared the no-wake zone, the skipper spooled the twin Volvos up, and the 44 Coupe came on plane with minimum bowrise. Throughout our entire test, regardless of our speed, bowrise never created a visibility problem — a good thing, since there was plenty of debris in the water.

Top speed was 29 knots at 3490 rpm, and fuel consumption was 43 gph. Speed was measured on an independent GPS, and fuel-consumption figures were produced by the engines' onboard computers. Lower speed produced lower fuel burn, with mileage around 0.8 to 0.9 mpg. The vessel responded smartly to the helm at all speeds and carved high-speed turns like an Olympic slalom skier.

We've tested a number of the new high-speed vessels making their way to market, including many built over-

➔ SPEC BOX

LOA	45 ft., 6 in.
BEAM	14 ft., 11 in.
DRAFT	3 ft., 9 in.
FUEL	350 gal.
WATER	118 gal.
POWER	Twin 485 hp Volvo IPS 600
PRICE AS TESTED	\$963,009
(plus freight, prep and commissioning)	

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

60-inch integrated swim platform, hot and cold transom shower, solid teak sole, power sunroof, air conditioning, two-burner cooktop, Isotherm refrigerator/freezer, VacuFlush toilets, 11.5 kw genset, Volvo IPS Joystick Plus control, Volvo Glass Cockpit, Lenco trim tabs and much more.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Hydraulic swim platform, Lenco auto trim, electric grill, powered sun awning, washer/dryer, central vacuum, ice-maker and much more.

BUILDER

TIARA YACHTS, Holland, Mich.; tiarayachts.com

WEST COAST DEALERS

SILVER SEAS YACHTS, San Diego, Sausalito, Newport Beach, Calif.; (888) 334-6739; silverseasyachts.com

ALEXANDER MARINE WASHINGTON, Seattle; (206) 344-8566; oceanalexander.com

CALIBRE YACHT SALES, North Vancouver, B.C.; (604) 929-0651; calibreyachts.com

seas, and the Tiara 44 Coupe is as good as any and better than most. It has sharp, modern styling, yet retains features that will appeal to the traditionalist. The fit and finish throughout is excellent.

Then there was the coffee cup that was accidentally left on the galley counter by one of the crew who had readied the vessel for us. It sat there during our entire test. I walked over and pushed it. It slid easily, so it was not "stuck" down to the counter by anything. The cup had been there as we slammed through a 3-foot chop, in hard-over turns and during rapid acceleration and deceleration, and had not moved! ☺