Second Act

TIARA YACHTS HAS PROVEN TIME AND AGAIN THAT IT CAN CREATE SOMETHING GROUNDBREAKING. THE 44 COUPE SHOWS IT CAN KEEP UP THE PACE.

BY JASON Y. WOOD

Tiara Yachts, Michigan-based builder of proven sea boats, invited me to its impressive facility on the shores of Lake Michigan to show off its Tiara 44 Coupe. Now I know the Great Lakes can get really rough, Gordon Lightfoot songs aside, so I was curious what I would find out when I took the helm of this stylish new design as a light rain began to fall.

Turns out Tiara Yachts has a bit of a success on its hands, and I was about to see why. With a combination of high tech and high style, the Tiara 44 Coupe seems to be hitting a sweet spot for a company looking to create a category killer to fit in with its sportfishing boats, cruising saloon express models, and open-layout express offerings.

Weather-wise the rough stuff never materialized. Truth is, the 44 Coupe sent us looking for other boats to see if we could find a few wakes bigger than our own, but we didn’t have much luck. I should say “much more luck,” since I took the helm and discovered the Tiara 44 Coupe is a fun and responsive cruiser with a pair of 435-horsepower Volvo Penta IPS600s. During our test she did everything we asked and responded well to the wheel and throttles. But cruisers take note: the Garmin Glass Cockpit command system made this boat very interesting to drive, at least for me.

Basically the system allows you to use the joystick at speed—not just for slow maneuvering—and it does that by taking control of the IPS fly-by-wire steering system. Initially I thought that if I owned this boat I would never use the joystick to drive at a faster clip, though it was cool to try it out. But the more I’ve thought about it since, I realized that this addition is an important step in how we use IPS because it’s the natural evolution of the joystick control system. I had it backwards. If we think about this objectively, retaining the wheel is by far the more strange aspect in the grand scheme of the system’s capabilities. It’s an upgrade that went into steering the IPS with a wheel, which was much more complex than adding at-speed control to the joystick. We’ve gotten to the tipping point where the technology is outstripping our ability to utilize it effectively—the wheel is only there to quell the fears of the 99 percent of boat-
ers who would look at a wheel-less helm and say, Now I have to learn how to drive a boat all over again.

The fact that most longer cruising runs would be managed through the autopilot makes it even more forward thinking: The Glass Cockpit system has an advanced autopilot system controlled by the joystick with tiny twists while wholesale course changes can be done simply by moving the stick. It’s a potent combination that must be experienced—the joystick offers an intuitive way to manage the autopilot as you adjust course, rather than the push-button or dial-up controls of a standard autopilot. And when you switch it off, you continue to use the joystick. Give it a test drive some time—the future is here.

The development team for the Tiara 44 Coupe didn’t go to the drawing board with a clean sheet of paper, however. The new launch is one way that Tiara is building on the momentum created by the 50 Coupe with her open main-deck plan with huge windows, Volvo Penta IPS propulsion, and Glass Cockpit helm system. It would be a bit of an understatement to say that something clicked with the launch of the 50 Coupe in 2013.

Tiara focused on a couple of different details that the designers realized were important and found one solution: They put the boat’s social areas all on one level, connecting the helm, saloon-galley, and cockpit. “It started with bringing the galley up and aft so it’s in a more central location between the aft cockpit and the enclosed saloon—as central a location as we can make it,” says Andrew Bartlett, product manager for Tiara Yachts. “And that has other benefits: You’re bringing the sociability up a notch, not isolating the person using the galley, making the lower level—we call it ‘heads and beds’—below essentially a private level for the owner and VIPs. We made the dayhead accessible right at the bottom of the steps. [The layout] brings the person in the gallery up and out to the saloon, to the social area, and it also makes that lower level to be a kind of private or owners-only area. The layout has been well accepted and it’s an easy conversation to have with most people who own a boat.”

The Tiara 44 Coupe, introduced in the summer of 2014, shares...
loads of DNA with her big sister, and that's no accident. Same goes for the 50 Flybridge, a model introduced to the public at the Ft. Lauderdale International Boat Show last year.

“Were encouraged by the reception of the 50 Coupe. The 44 is absolutely an endeavor to cast a wider net and provide the Coupe to more of the marketplace,” Bartlett says. “The 50 deserved a product to complement it, we didn’t have to adjust the recipe. It’s very exciting.”

While much about the 44 Coupe shows the company’s new direction in model development, her construction follows the company’s same proven method: Balsa-cored hull sides are encapsulated in hand-laid fiberglass cured with premium resin. The decks are cored with balsa as well. Don’t be surprised if you see this line continue to grow, though Tiara is keeping quiet about plans right now.

As with any IPS-powered boat, the engine room meets the criteria set forth by Volvo Penta for its pod-propulsion system. It’s here that stringers, collars, and other structural elements are plainly visible in the stoop height (as in 37 inches) sole to overhead space, but there’s a good amount of space to get around the engines—even on the outboard sides. In fact, we discovered the design of the engine room is a core part of this next-generation lineup from Tiara (see “Engine Special: Shafts and Shifts,” opposite), and shows off the thought process well.

The cockpit sports a molded-in transom lounge with table as well as steps to the side decks and aft to the swim platform. Our test boat had a Nautical Structures hydraulic swim platform with 850-pound capacity suitable for holding a tender—an add-on on that could really expand cruising options. This boat has a lot to recommend it for cruising. A two-state-room, two-state-layout presents a compromise to which boaters these days should be getting accustomed: the sacrifice of headroom above berths. In boats that place big staterooms amidships, this is one of the first decisions made by the designers, and it’s a good one. Provided occupants don’t make a habit of sitting bolt-upright in bed, the 31-inch height over the twin berths in this guest stateroom won’t be a bother. In the places where you will wish to stand, by the door to the stateroom, say, or by the built-in seat to port, the overhead height is 6 feet 2 inches. This stateoom’s head doubles as the dayhead, though the MSD is placed in the shower, beneath a fold-down bench.

The master in the bow has a 6-foot 4-inch overhead, and a luxurious en suite head with separate shower. A cedar-lined hanging locker and a giga-trunk beneath the berth—a Tiara trademark—round out the stowage.

While the living spaces belowdecks are nicely appointed, they’re for sleeping, and those of us who prefer to make the most of time on the water know the main attraction on this boat will be the saloon. A generous L-shaped settee is to starboard and stretches for sleeping, and those of us who prefer to make the most of time above berths. In boats that place big staterooms amidships, this is one of the first decisions made by the designers, and it’s a good one. Provided occupants don’t make a habit of sitting bolt-upright in bed, the 31-inch height over the twin berths in this guest stateroom won’t be a bother. In the places where you will wish to stand, by the door to the stateroom, say, or by the built-in seat to port, the overhead height is 6 feet 2 inches. This stateoom’s head doubles as the dayhead, though the MSD is placed in the shower, beneath a fold-down bench.

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