

HOW TO REPLACE A CUTLASS BEARING // 5 TIPS FOR A BETTER-BUFFED BOAT

Sea

AMERICA'S WESTERN BOATING MAGAZINE

RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY

A BY-THE-NUMBERS ACCOUNT OF
A VERY WET BROUGHTONS CRUISE

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HELMSMAN 38 PILOTHOUSE

TRADITIONAL DESIGN, MODERN COMFORT AND PERFORMANCE

The low-speed small trawler is making a comeback, and one of the traditional designs in that market segment is the Helmsman 38 Pilothouse. Is this boat for everyone? No. But what boat is? Whenever people ask me what kind of boat they should buy, my response is along the lines of this: “Buy a boat that will do what you want to do with it.” That usually leads to further discussions, and sometimes I use an automotive expression: “A mechanic who has to transport tools and equipment from one job to another will need a truck, but a racing driver will need a race car.”

Our test boat, the 38-foot Helmsman trawler, is in the truck category and one of an increasing number of trawlers being offered to boaters. Trawlers in this market segment generally are stoutly built, have an economical single engine and cruise anywhere from 6 to 8 knots, getting

between 2 and 3 nmpg at those speeds. These vessels usually have a top speed of about 13 or 14 knots, which is useful for battling the current and tide or outrunning the weather, but captains pay a substantial price in increased fuel consumption if they run at top speed.

The Helmsman 38 (previously

marketed as the Mariner 37 Seville Pilothouse) fits comfortably in the market segment. As we approached the vessel at its dock in Seattle, I noted the traditional trawler look, with a full-beam aft salon and a low-rise pilothouse. It has the traditional bolt-on fiberglass swim step and cockpit access through a transom gate. The swim step is positioned just the right height above the water — about level with the dock, which makes boarding quick, safe and easy.

As we entered the cockpit, I noted the bottom of the transom door frame has a stainless steel tread. While it might seem like a small thing, that is a high-wear area — almost everyone getting on board steps there — and serious transom wear can occur at that point without the protection of a hard-wearing metal plate.

The solid fiberglass hull is hand-laminated using vinylester resin on the outer layers. Internal stiffness is provided by a glass grid throughout the vessel. An epoxy barrier coat is applied



ABOVE Satin-varnished teak dominates the interior spaces of the Helmsman 38, while up top the chariot-style flybridge provides great visibility.

below the waterline to help reduce the possibility that the glass will take up water. All of the railings are two-rung welded stainless steel, and all of the welds are ground flush and polished. Bow railings are bigger and stronger

than the side rails. The full-keel hull has a stainless steel rudder and rudder shoe.

The anchor locker is accessed through a deck hatch and drains overboard. A stainless, self-launching anchor

hold-down assembly completes the bow area. Access to the lazarette is through an aft cockpit hatch.

The fiberglass deck has a sharp non-skid surface molded in. The steps that lead up to the flybridge are more stair-like than ladder-like, and visibility from up top is excellent all around. The flybridge itself is chariot style but still has good forward visibility with very little bow “sight shadow.” There is plenty of room for socializing on the top deck, with seating for at least a half dozen. There’s also a lot of storage under the seats.

MOVING INSIDE

There are three ways to access the deckhouse: the traditional doors off the cockpit, or port and starboard wheelhouse doors. All of the doors are mounted in stainless frames. The vessel’s upperworks contain more glass than fiberglass; therefore, plenty of natural light floods the inside. This makes the interior bright and cheery even on an overcast day.

All interior floors are well-fitted teak and holly, which nicely complements the satin-finished teak woodwork. The salon includes the galley to starboard and an L-shaped settee with a drop-down table to port. Also to port, forward of the settee, is the day head/shower. A watertight door through the head’s forward bulkhead provides engine-room access for routine inspections and service, an unusual but very effective arrangement. The machinery space can also be accessed through a pair of hatches in the wheelhouse floor. The head access to the engine space means that floor hatches do not have to be opened for routine engine inspections, thereby reducing the inconvenience to those on board. The engine space itself is neat and tidy, and all service points are accessible.

Another noticeable feature on our test boat is a curtain track on the overhead. When the curtain is in place, it creates a private space that includes a berth — created when the settee is converted — and the day head. Helmsman has, very cleverly and at very little cost, created a temporary second private stateroom, complete with a head, in the

main salon.

The galley is to starboard and is complete with hinged drop-down cupboards, granite countertops, a refrigerator/freezer, a stainless sink and designer faucet, and a Seaward Princess propane stove. The galley has plenty of counter space and good storage for a 38-footer.

The master stateroom is forward and is also well finished with plenty of satin-varnished teak. It boasts an island queen bed with storage underneath, and there is also plenty of storage in hanging lockers and drawers. An overhead hatch and hull portholes let in plenty of outside light and provide good ventilation when they're open. The raised bed has storage underneath, and there



0.6 gph. At 1000 rpm, we moved along at 5.8 knots, burning 1.5 gph. The noisemeter read 72 decibels.

When we stepped the rpm up to 1500, our speed increased to 7.75 knots and our fuel burn to 3 gph. Our noisemeter showed 73 decibels. We burned 7.5 gph at 2000 rpm and made 9 knots. When we set the throttle to 2500 revs, we burned 13.1 gph and cruised along at 11.4 knots. Wide-open throttle, 2920 rpm, gave us 14 knots with a fuel burn of 20.7 gph.

The engine ran smoothly and without fuss. The vessel responded well to all control inputs and seemed to be mechanically comfortable at all speeds, an indication that the components of the driveline were well matched. In tight turns, there was no skidding or chatter, and the vessel did not "wander" once a course was set.

Water conditions were calm, but we managed to find a few wakes created by other vessels, and the 38 handled them fine, knifing solidly through. This vessel is designed and built for comfortable, low-speed cruising, and our test indicated it performs that function very well. Fuel-consumption figures at displacement speeds of about 6 knots indicated we were getting about 3.92 nmpg, excellent mileage for a vessel of this size and type.

The Helmsman 38 is a well-thought-out coastal cruiser. The fit and finish of the woodwork is excellent, and the interior is bright and cheery. A separate day head is unusual in a boat of this size, but it makes cruising with guests much easier, and the curtain arrangement creating a temporary second private space is quite clever. The placement of two overhead grabrails in

TESTER'S OPINION:

The Helmsman 38 is a well-thought-out coastal cruiser. Anyone looking for a vessel in this category should put the Helmsman on the must-see list.

are bookshelves to port and starboard. Reading lights are standard. The en suite head features an electric Masterflush toilet, a vanity and a separate shower stall.

The Helmsman's low-profile pilothouse, up a couple of steps from the salon, is large and spacious with an L-shaped convertible settee to port and the helm station to starboard. Visibility is excellent, and because the pilothouse is low rise, it is possible for the skipper to see easily into the salon and onto the back deck through the aft salon windows.

PERFORMANCE

We fired up the Helmsman's Cummins MerCruiser QSB 5.9 engine and idled away from the dock. This 1,350-pound, common-rail, six-cylinder diesel flashed up instantly without smoke or clatter. The noise level at idle, 600 rpm, was 70 decibels, about the same as a normal conversation. At idle speed, we made 3.6 knots and burned

➔ SPEC BOX

LOA 40 ft., 6 in. LWL 34 ft., 6 in.

BEAM 13 ft., 11 in. DRAFT 4 ft.

DISPLACEMENT 24,500 lbs.

ENGINE Cummins MerCruiser QSB 5.9, 380 hp

CRUISING SPEED 8 knots MAX SPEED 15 knots

PRICE \$385,024

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Cummins QSB 5.9 liter electronically controlled common-rail diesel engine (230 hp), Vetus 7-inch bow thruster, Lewmar V3 windlass, FRP radar mast w/hinge, ladder at swim platform, twin 30-amp shore-power inlets on transom, 45-lb. stainless steel Bruce-type anchor, Nova Kool refrigerator, Seaward Princess propane stove w/propane locker on bridgedeck, 11-gal. electric water heater, three electric bilge pumps, cockpit shower (hot and cold), Masterflush heads (2), three pantographic windshield wipers, pedestal helm seat on flybridge, LED interior lighting, overhead drop-down cabinets in galley, hawse holes on transom (2), aft (2) and midships (2), white gelcoat w/gray nonskid, storage cabinet aft of galley, Webasto Air Top 5500 cabin heating system, epoxy barrier coating, bottom paint and more. See dealer for full list.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

A range of engine choices up to 480 hp, including Yanmar, Luger and Isuzu, a variety of cabin climate-control options, washer/dryer, ice-maker, custom cabinetry, custom upholstery, electrical system modifications, stern thruster, radar arch (instead of standard radar mast), a variety of windlass/ground-tackle configurations, dinghy and davit systems, navigational electronics and more. See dealer for full list.

WEST COAST DEALER

Waterline Boats, Seattle; helmsmantrawlers.com;
(206) 282-0110

the main salon, as well as other rails strategically placed throughout the boat, indicates the vessel was designed by people who have actually been to sea.

The modern, computer-controlled engine is well suited to the vessel and its drivetrain, and operates very efficiently at displacement speeds, a factor to be considered with the price of fuel being what it is. Anyone looking for a vessel in this category should put the Helmsman on the must-see list. 🐾