



[2002 Performance Reports]

MORE ROAR

With 1,350 horsepower under the hatches, the Hustler 377 Talon remains a wonderfully manageable-and memorable-ride.

Story by staff

Talk about wish fulfillment. Last February we tested a Hustler 377 Talon catamaran for our June 2001 Speed Issue, and we secretly wished the boat had more power. Not that it was a slouch with twin 550-hp HP575SCi engines from Mercury Racing-the 37'-long, 10'4"-wide cat ran 108.6 mph. But the boat was so solid at that speed that we were sure it could handle more power. A lot more.

The folks at the Calverton, N.Y., company must have read our minds, because they sent another 377 Talon to our 2002 Performance Trials with twin 675-hp Keith Eickert engines. And the cat felt every bit as solid at speeds of more than 120 mph as it did running 10 mph slower.

With the supercharged, fuel-injected Eickert mills and other upgrades the 377 Talon arrived with a \$376,761 sticker. Base price for the cat with a pair of Mercury Racing HP500EFI motors is \$281,021.



PERFORMANCE

Originally designed by Gary Armington for Talon, the 377 had two sponsons, each with two steps, a strake and a notch, and a center pod, which also had two steps and a notch. Transom deadrise was 21 degrees.

Armington's design has been a proven winner on the offshore racing circuit over the years for three good reasons: It's efficient, stable and rides well in rough water. We found that true in the 377 Talon we tested last winter in Miami, and we reaffirmed it at our 2002 Trials stop in Placida, Fla.

Top speed for the cat, which transferred its horsepower to the water through Bravo One XR drives-on Stellings extension boxes-spinning Mercury Bravo One 15 1/4" x 36" four-blade stainless-steel propellers through a 1.26:1 reduction was 122.7 mph at 5,400 rpm. It's worth mentioning that the day we tested the 377 Talon was, like all test days during our week in Placida, 90-plus-degrees with humidity to match-conditions that likely stole a few ticks from its top speed.

Time to plane was 4.8 seconds. While not explosive, standing-start acceleration was steady. The boat reached 72 mph in 20 seconds. The same could be said for the boat's midrange pop, with it running

from 30 to 50 mph in 5.8 seconds, 40 to 60 mph in 6.1 seconds and 40 to 70 mph in 9.2 seconds. Throughout all speed and acceleration drills, the Eickert motors ran smoothly and responded quickly to throttle input.

Straight A's across the board-that's what the 377 Talon earned in all handling and rough-water ability tests. Our lead test driver and co-pilot found themselves grinning and nodding vigorously at each other as the cat aced one drill after the next. The catamaran leaned into turns as well as any cat we tested this year, held a precise line through corners at various speeds and landed pillow soft in 3- to 4-footers offshore. The angle of attack didn't much matter-the cat took seas head-on as well as it followed, and quartered them with equal perfection.



From left: Hustler's 377 Talon has a wraparound dash with all the instrumentation from Gaffrig. In this catamaran, the cabin is accessed by flipping up the center seat of the rear bench. Under the hatch, Hustler went with twin Keith Eickert 675-hp engines, good for 122.7 mph.

WORKMANSHIP

Hustler dressed the 377 Talon in what could charitably be described as a vanilla-white package, but the gelcoat did have a respectable shine and it was mostly free of dimples. Most likely, whoever buys the model we tested will paint it, and the new owner will appreciate protection offered by the boat's substantial plastic rubrail with a rubber insert.

According to the manufacturer-supplied lamination schedule, the boat was hand-built with vinylester resin and triaxial and biaxial roving with carbon fiber. Core cell of various thickness was used throughout the hull and deck, which also were vacuum-bagged. Transverse bulkheads were used to enhance strength, and the hull, deck and inner liner were fiberglassed together.

Stainless-steel hardware complemented the 377 Talon's white exterior. A nav light was forward on the side of each sponson. In addition to six Accon Pull-Up cleats-dispersed in pairs fore, amidships and aft-there was a mushroom-style cleat on each side near the fairings to hold a fender. Unlike the other pieces of hardware, the handrail that ran down the center of the deck was painted white.

Opening from the center out on a pair of electric screw jacks, the two engine hatches were constructed of fiberglass. When completely open, the hatches provided great access to the Eickert power plants, which were held fast on racing-style mounts and L-angles through-bolted to the stringers, as well as the standard transom assemblies.

Rigging, too, was up to high-quality offshore standards. Stainless-steel cushion clamps supported all the wiring and the bilge finish was smooth. All hoses and cables also were properly supported.

INTERIOR

To beat the heat while they tape-recorded a few comments, our lead test driver and co-pilot ducked into the cat's cabin. Surprisingly spacious, the cabin was cleverly situated between the aft section of the cockpit and the front of the engine compartment, and was accessible via a flip-up section of the bolster-style rear bench. Twin facing lounges inside the cabin converted to a usable berth with filler cushions. More than likely, however, the cabin will function as a changing room.

Classic and functional, the cockpit featured the previously noted bolster/bench and twin high-back buckets seats for the driver and co-pilot. Angled footrests, recesses for twin coolers and the bases for the buckets were part of the deck mold, and the sole was surfaced in nonskid and covered in snap-in carpet.

Hustler outfitted the 377 Talon's starboard side helm station with center-mounted chrome Gaffrig throttles and shifters, as well as Gaffrig gauges, including a 120-mph GPS speedometer, in blue bezels. Rubber-booted toggle switches activated all the boat's accessories.

To help the co-pilot navigate, the manufacturer installed a Garmin 152 GPS unit in the port dash. Lower-tech but well appreciated, grab handles also were installed for the co-pilot.

OVERALL

Hustler made a shrewd move when it bought the molds for the 377 Talon, because it enabled the manufacturer to enter the catamaran market with an established performer. But the Hustler crew still had to execute—they had to build and rig the cat with the kind expertise it deserved—and execute they did.