





ANOTHER LEVEL

With its twin V-10-powered Mach F-29, Dave's Custom Boats has set a mighty high bar for the sport-catamaran class.

HAVING TESTED THREE MACH F-29 CATAMARANS FROM DAVE'S CUSTOM BOATS IN THE last few years, we were sure the latest incarnation, decked out in painted graphics from the renowned The Art of Design shop, would be built with a level of detail that bordered on maniacal. We were also sure that the sport cat would handle with sweet precision. What we didn't know was how it would take to the pair of 625-hp Ilmor V-10 engines under its hatch. We've tested the Ilmor powerhouses in several applications, but this was our first go-round with them in a cat with which we were extremely familiar.

The bottom line on the pairing? It was a home run. The warranted big-block engines found a perfect home in the 29-footer, and they delivered everything from 120-plus-mph top-end to snappy acceleration in the middle range. In turn, the refined cat retained its impeccable handling manners.

PERFORMANCE

To handle the combined 1,250 hp produced by the Ilmor engines, the DCB crew went with 1.35:1 reduction IMCO Xtreme Advantage SC drives. Putting the juice to good use were a pair of variable diameter (15" and 15 1/4") 32"-pitch six-blade Hering propellers.

With the engines turning 5,700 rpm, top speed for the Mach F-29 was 121.2 mph. Given the relatively tame power involved, it's safe to say we were more than pleased



The Mach F-29 tracked perfectly even when trimmed for top speed.

with that number. And though they were running at the peak of their operating range, the Ilmor engines showed no signs, or sounds, of stress or strain.

From a standing start, the 29-footer did take a little long to come over—7.3 seconds to be exact—but bow rise was not excessive. The catamaran was propped for top-end, and for this reason it reached only 65 mph in 20 seconds from dead in the water. However, midrange acceleration was healthy and consistent. The cat ran from 30 to 50 mph in 5.6 seconds, 40 to 60 mph in 5.7 seconds and 40 to 70 mph in 9.6 seconds.

Though the Mach F-29 earned good scores in low- and middle-speed slalom and circle turns, it strutted its best stuff in high-speed maneuvers. The cat always leaned into higher-speed turns, stayed connected to the water in the most reassuring manner and released gently.

Tracking, even when the boat was trimmed up for maximum speed, was perfect. The F-29 didn't just walk over boat wakes and chop—it danced over them.

WORKMANSHIP

Fine craftsmanship has become axiomatic to Dave's Custom Boats—it's a defining attribute that cannot be separated from the company. True, when a 29-foot sport cat boasts a \$300,000-plus sticker, that's exactly as it should be, but the builder still has to execute. Once again, DCB has proven it can.

At \$27,000, The Art of Design paint job was what we've come to expect from the Elkhart, Ind., company. It was precise and spectacular, and in no small measure that was due to the flawless blank canvas provided by DCB. Tooling was simply spotless, and

the capping of the hull and deck joint to create a seamless, rubrail-free sheerline was as good as it gets. Lay-up materials included vinylester resin and multidirectional knitted fiberglass.

To maintain the cat's clean, slinky lines, the builder minimized hardware. The only obvious piece was a billet swim platform, with a pull-down ladder, between the drives. Pushpin fenders and lines connected to the boat through discreet receptacles that didn't spoil its lines. LED navigation lights were flush-mounted to the hull. The distortion-free, F-16-style quarter canopies fit cleanly into recesses in the deck.

Though the engines were naturally aspirated, the fiberglass engine hatch was outfitted with scoops for better ventilation. Two screw jacks raised the hatch for access to the color-matched engines, which were

installed on custom-fabricated mounts from DCB. Wires were strongly supported and gathered in parallel looms. The entire installation was sanitary.

INTERIOR

Twin high-back bucket seats and a straight-back four-person bench comprised the seating accommodations in the Mach F-29's carpeted cockpit. Even though the bench wasn't a bolster-style, a welcome feature we've seen in a lot of catamarans of late, it was uncommonly deep. That, plus grab handles and well-padded gunwales, should give bench passengers a feeling of security.

Still, the best seats in the house were the buckets. First, each provided great support and comfort. Second, the quarter canopies were incredibly effective at protecting the driver and co-pilot from onrushing wind. In fact, they were so effective in keeping off the breeze that DCB installed forced-air cooling vents, as it always does, at each station.

The co-pilot's station to port had its share of goodies including a 140-mph speedometer from Livorsi Marine, anodized grab handles

and an Alpine CD stereo system.

The starboard-side command center was, per the DCB breed, completely decked out with top-flight elements. Gauges around the tilt steering wheel were from Livorsi Marine. Throttles and shifters were from Latham Marine. Rubber-booted toggle switches for the accessories were mounted in function-etched panels. The station looked more like the cockpit of an aircraft than the helm of a performance boat.

Despite the Mach F-29's low deck, the builder managed to create a useable cabin with rear-facing love seats and coolers in dedicated vinyl-finished retainers. The entire area was carpeted and trimmed in vinyl where appropriate.

OVERALL

There's no real secret to the success of DCB—the people there care about all the details. The same applies to Ilmor, at least in our experience. We've seen nothing but consistency and reliability from its engines during our tests. The marriage of DCB's Mach F-29 with Ilmor's 625-hp V-10s isn't just a good one. It's one of the best matches we've seen in a long time. **P**



TEST RESULTS

DCB MACH F-29

TEST CONDITIONS

Temperature	95 degrees
Humidity	24 percent
Wind speed	3 to 5 mph
Water conditions	Flat
Elevation	450 feet

HULL INFORMATION

Deadrise at transom	14.5 degrees
Centerline	29'
Beam	8'10"
Hull weight	8,000 pounds

PRICING INFORMATION

Base retail with twin MerCruiser 496 Mag HO engines	\$179,950
Price as tested	\$338,180

ENGINE & PROPELLER

Engine	(2) Ilmor MV-10 625
Cylinder type	V-10
Cubic-inch displacement/horsepower	505/625
Lower-unit gear ratio	1.35:1
Propeller	Hering six-blade 15" x 32"; 15 1/4" x 32"

OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT

Upgrade to twin Ilmor MV-10 625 engines (\$84,000), The Art of Design paint work (\$27,500), IMCO SC Quad Ram (\$11,500), standoff boxes (\$10,500), full cap with no rubrail (\$10,000), F-16-style canopies (\$4,250), cabin love seats (\$2,500), custom scoops (\$2,495), Hering props (\$2,000), stainless tilt helm (\$1,000), fiberglass hardback seats (\$895), billet LED nav and interior lights (\$695), recessed self-draining ice chests (\$500) and billet standoff shower (\$395).

ACCELERATION

5 seconds	18 mph
10 seconds	36 mph
15 seconds	48 mph
20 seconds	65 mph

MIDRANGE ACCELERATION

30-50 mph	5.6 seconds
40-60 mph	5.7 seconds
40-70 mph	9.6 seconds

RPM VS. MPH

1000	.7 mph
1500	.12 mph
2000	.23 mph
2500	.43 mph
3000	.57 mph
3500	.73 mph
4000	.80 mph
4500	.95 mph
5000	1.10 mph
5500	1.17 mph

TOP SPEED AT RPM

Radar	121.2 mph at 5,700
GPS	121 mph

PLANING

Time to plane	7.3 seconds
Minimum planing speed	23 mph

FUEL ECONOMY

At 25 mph	NA
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FUEL CAPACITY

120 gallons

TEST CONDUCTED AT

Parker, Ariz.

MANUFACTURER

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Clockwise from top left: Latham Marine throttles and shifters were right of the driver's seat. Ilmor's 625-hp V-10s powered the boat to better than 120 mph. The helm looked more like an airplane cockpit than that of a performance boat. The rear four-person bench was uncommonly deep and the buckets were comfortable.