

The Boat Doctor

Q&A By Pierce Hoover

Repair or Replace?

[Q] I have a 1989 21-foot Donzi Regazza runabout. The engine has more than 1,000 hours on it. This past season the engine block cracked. Boatyards have quoted me up to \$8,000 for replacement of the OMC Cobra 5.7-liter motor and risers. Various motor distributors say I can get a “complete, new, ready-to-run” motor for about \$4,500.

What’s so complicated about removing the motor if you have the tools? Aside from balancing the engine, am I missing something?

WALLY DODDS

West Chester, Pennsylvania

[A] It might be as simple as that. But we suspect that, during the process, you may uncover other issues like transom rot, stringer rot and a host of worn parts in places such as the engine’s connection to the outdrive — many of which may not be included in the rebuild kit.

The job will require some degree of knowledge or instruction for first-timers, plus a lift capable of handling 800 pounds. You have to be precise when aligning the engine with the drive. Get a Clymer manual for your engine from primemedia.com. If you like a mechanical challenge, I’m sure you’d find it rewarding. On the other hand, if you just want to get back on the water, bite the bullet and pay a pro.

Shameless Plugs

[Q] Simple questions: Is the transom plug inserted from inside the boat or from the outside? Also, can I remove the plug while under way at moderate speed to drain the water?

JEFF WIECK

Cheney, Washington

[A] The answer to your first question is: either way. The answer to the second is yes, provided the boat’s draft is shallow enough that the garboard drain plug is out of the water on plane. It’s an easier proposition in small boats, but in larger boats, it’s a two-man job — and imagine what would happen if you dropped the plug. Nevertheless, if you do it, make sure to reinsert it firmly — and do so each time you launch.

(WE TEST STUFF)

RMR Industries BTS Protectant

BTS Protectant is said to be similar in efficacy to the popular Armor All and 303 brands. It’s intended to be applied to plastics of all types to enhance color and shine and to provide protection from the elements. Most notably, it’s hyped as being a replacement for wax on a boat’s gelcoat, which is plastic.

To test it, I de-waxed a section of flag-blue hull and applied BTS to perform a side-by-side, sun-by-sun, salt-by-salt comparison. After 45 days, the BTS test panel was glossier than the neighboring wax area, although to my eye the shine didn’t have the depth of the waxed sections. Still, it looked darn good. And remember, this is a spray-on, wipe-off product, so it doesn’t require even one-quarter the effort or time that applying quality paste wax does.

What makes BTS perform better than other “quick fixes” are the biocides mixed into its formulation. These kill the microbes that live in the microscopic pores of gelcoat and other substrates, ensuring the little buggers don’t contribute to a lackluster finish. As such, I also found it wonderful for protecting coaming pads and the interior of in-sole stowage boxes — places where I normally get mildew, even with good traditional maintenance. \$15.99 (32 ounces); cleverinnovations.net or marine retailers. — K.F.



Higher Power

[Q] I’d like to be able to run at 18 to 20 knots with my 21 DLX Carolina Skiff. Should I purchase a 50 hp motor and run it hard, or a 70 hp and run it moderately, or a 90 hp and run it easy for the very best miles per gallon?

RICHARD MICHNA

Quogue, New York



Smoke from a diesel's exhaust carries a message

about what’s going on inside.

WHITE

Water in the fuel or leaking into the cylinders

BLUE

Burning of lubrication oil, which means bad rings, oil seals or valve guides, or too much oil in the crankcase

BLACK

Clogged injectors or a restriction in the air supply



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