

FISHING MACHINES FISH TRIALS NEW BOATS BOAT TIPS BETTER BOATING

SF BOATS

MAY 2017 / VOL 32 — ISSUE 5



SF BOATS SPOTLIGHT

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COURTESY GRADY-WHITE BOATS

GRADY-WHITE

Twenty-three of Grady's 26 current boat models come with standard (14) or optional (9) fiberglass hardtops. The company's hardtop designs date back all the way to the early '80s, when boat and outboard technologies were making it safer to go farther offshore and spend longer days on the water.

"The need to stay out of the sun and rain was a driving factor," says Shelley Tubaugh, Grady's vice president of marketing. "Many of the early designs were lightweight fiberglass shells that we elevated on simple aluminum frames onto which we bolted a radio box and some rod holders."

With feedback from customers, the company designed a strong, durable top for its cabin boats — a prime factor for anglers taking longer trips. "By adding built-in storage nets for life jackets and other safety equipment, molding in the electronics boxes and adding more rod-holder storage — horizontal and vertical — we made the new generation of hardtops a key component for that terrific day offshore," she says.

As boats began trending toward multipurpose fishing, family and



functional vessels, tops for both dual and center consoles became more intricate. Grady designed molded-in cavities that allow for extendable sunshades, lighting, wire routing, sunroofs and even flat-screen TV storage.

"All of this has added weight, so the structures that support the tops

have become more robust," Tubaugh says. "Aesthetic expectations are now at a much higher level on the tops and structures. Tops are more shapely and aerodynamic. Often the underside of the top is painted to match the hull color. Frames are also painted and are using more interesting shapes than simple round pipe to achieve a more architectural look."

The embodiment of those trends and innovations came together in Grady's AV2 hardtop, first displayed on the Freedom 375 model. The AV2 comes with a sunroof (and a sliding screen), TV and horizontal rod storage in a molded overhead cavity.

"We also are developing full-height windshields for all of the center console models 20 feet and longer, and now offer the AV2 on the Express 330 and 370," she says.



Top right: New hardtops demonstrate custom color coordination and curved frames. **Above left:** The AV2 hardtop, first introduced on Grady's Freedom 375, comes with molded-in rod storage and an electronically retractable sunshade (above right).