

BAJA 20SS

POWER: MARINER 200



As you roam down the long aisles at a boat show from time to time, a special craft will catch your eye and you get a gut feeling based on looks alone that this machine has got what it takes to satisfy your every need. The Baja 20SS is one of those boats that will strike the fancy of potential buyers who are looking for snazzy styling, dynamite skiing ability and top end performance that will leave other crafts in their wake.

We can't imagine that there is a better propulsion system for the Baja 20SS than the new top-of-the-line Mariner 200. Although the boat is offered in a stern drive and jet version, our battery of tests concurred that this engine/hull

combination was as perfect a match as you could ever hope for.

Naturally, with a V-6 outboard on the transom, your first inclination upon boarding the Baja is to push the accelerator to the maximum and see how fast this spunky performer can go. Leaning down hard on the throttle and working diligently to find optimum trim on this sensitive hull, our evaluations rated the craft as having true mile per minute capability. This type of performance is rather noteworthy considering the boats quality of workmanship and very reasonable \$9,287 price tag.

Without reservation, the test staff agreed that the 20SS was one of the most exciting boats to drive that we had in the Performance Trials. Unlike some boats where top end can be pulled with a mere shove of the accelerator, the Baja was somewhat challenging due to its extreme sensitivity to trim control. While running the boat we learned that the hull is actually susceptible to too much trim. When the potent Mariner is pushed all the way out it forces the boat

to flutter and teeter without increasing top end speed. Consider a good working trim gauge and speedometer as standard equipment on this boat because you will need both instruments to operate the craft effectively.

We were especially impressed with the boats ability to handle adverse water conditions. Running in a wind rippled one foot chop, the boat was solid and steady no matter what direction the bow was pointed. With the trim set at a very conservative angle, the 20SS took a level and true set as it floated over the chop at speeds of approximately 55 mph. With the engine tucked in, the boat was unaffected by whatever conditions the water had to offer.

Steering was responsive thanks to the dual Ride-Guide set-up that Baja considers standard equipment in making the 20SS safe first and fast second. Things can get a little hairy if the driver over-trims. Then the torque on the wheel becomes almost unbearable and the fabulous performance of the hull begins to deteriorate in a big hurry. While maneuvering the Baja in tight cornering



we couldn't help but wonder how significantly the steering would be improved if and when Mariner (a division of Mercury Marine) uses the Hydrasteer system that has been incorporated on the new Mercury 300. This new outboard rudder system, which feels much like power steering to a driver, would be a bonafide plus on the 20SS.

In addition to the overall speed abilities of this potent mid-sized stomer,

the fuel economy was a sight to behold. The Mariner V-6, which started on the first turn of the key and idled like a purring kitten, only required 6-7 gph at skiing speeds between 25 and 35 mph. If you're like most of the test staff you can't help running the boat at full bore for extended periods of time. But don't worry about the fuel bill at full tilt since the Mariner needs only 9 gph at 45 and 10 gph at 50 mph.

Using a flat stock mounted transom height of 23 inches, in hanging the Mariner, this boat was unsurpassed in the water ski evaluations. Take-off power was no problem as the hard churning outboard yanked test skier Lisa Emry out of the water in slightly over two seconds. Once up and skiing, the wake on the 20SS was ideal for slaloming as the boat provided a steady, even and constant pull. Since we know the Baja will have to endure hour after hour of skiing use, we would advise hanging a transom boarding ladder on the boat to aid re-entry of tucked out skiers.

If you're the type of mechanically

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BAJA 20SS

inclined individual who enjoys fiddling with engine heights, trim and various prop combinations then the 60 mph capacity of the Baja could readily be improved without destroying the fine handling characteristics of the boat. With a little savvy you could probably nurse 65+ mph out of the craft. But remember, as the engine goes up the skiability goes down.

Not only does the Baja exhibit splendid performance characteristics, particularly on the top end, but it is well built with fine quality construction. Using a mild 15 degree angle to the vee at the transom and three sizeable two inch strakes on each side, the 20SS possesses an enormous amount of stable lift throughout the entire speed range. The boat has two stringers supporting the floor and the hull has a very solid feel due to the liberal use of balsa wood.

Baja also took a great deal of pride in the quality workmanship used in fabricating the deck on the 20SS. In our dry land inspection, we discovered that the deck was just as solid as the rest of

the hull. Baja was aware that when beaching this boat, a good number of footsteps would probably cross the deck so they used a light piece of quarter-inch balsa wood and glass in the hull's upper

side and supported it with a well conceived bracing system.

The interior of the 20SS was comfortable and well thought out. The boat features twin forward facing bucket



seats with the passenger's chair swiveling for increased visibility of a skier. The front seats are fairly comfortable but feature no side supports. An added comfort feature of the interior is a slanted padded arm rest that runs the entire length of each gunnel. Set in at a 45 degree angle to offer protection, these arm rests were a big plus whenever the water conditions became the least bit nasty.

As we mentioned earlier, the engine and hull matched perfectly not only in the performance department but also in

HULL SPECIFICATIONS

Make/Model	Baja 20SS
Hull configuration	Mod Vee
Length	20'4"
Beam	88"
Hull weight (without engine)	1,340
Construction process	Hand lay
Passenger capacity	.950 pounds
Retail price as tested	\$9,287

(not including trailer)

STANDARD EQUIPMENT: Front bucket seats, rear bench seat, vent system, 18 gallon tank with gauge, dual mechanical steering, deck cleats, stainless steel bow and ski eyes, carpeting, carpeted ski racks, bow storage and transom drain plug.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT: Speedometer, custom mooring cover, swim ladder, custom grab bar, wood grain steering wheel, windshield, bow rails, swivel passenger seat, transom pad, horn, 24 gallon tank with gauge, exterior finish.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT ON TEST BOAT: Swivel seats, full instrumentation, speedometer, windshield, special exterior finish.

the appearance category. Using an artist's touch, the test boat was highlighted with a combination of grays, silver and reds which blended perfectly with the popular Mariner colors. All paint work was done in the gel coat for lasting protection and we didn't set eyes on a more appealing hull throughout the Trials. According to Baja President Doug Smith, it takes almost two and a half days to build one of these marvelous creations and we believe future 20SS buyers will find it construction time well spent.



COLOR OPTIONS: Any color combination.

ADDRESS OF HULL MANUFACTURER:

Baja Boats
P.O. Box 1009
Bucyrus, Ohio 44820

ENGINE AND PROPULSION SPECIFICATIONS

Make/Model	Mariner 200
Cylinder type	V-6
Cubic inch displacement	142 cubic inch
Maximum H.P. at rpm	200 at 5200
Fuel	Gasoline/50:1 oil mixture
Drive	Outboard
Prop	Mercury SS, 14 1/4 x 25, 3 blades

TEST STAFF

Test driver	Bob Nordskog
Test observer	Dick DeBartolo
Ski driver	Wade Worley
Ski observer	Mark Spencer
Skier	Lisa Emry

MEASURED PERFORMANCE DATA

Indicated top speed - calibrated speedometer	62
Indicated top speed - stock speedometer	60
Recorded top speed - radar speed gun	61
Measured top speed - measured 1/8 mile	60.5
Maximum RPM - calibrated tachometer	6000
Maximum RPM - stock tachometer	6000
Time to reach plane	2.44
Minimum plane speed	14 mph
Distance to stop from 35 mph	195 feet
Time to stop from 35 mph	7.70 seconds
Decibel reading (35 mph at 50 feet)	85 dB(A)

FUEL CONSUMPTION DATA

25 mph consumes	6 gph =	4.16 mpg
35 mph consumes	7 gph =	5 mpg
45 mph consumes	9 gph =	5 mpg
50 mph consumes	10 gph =	5 mpg

CONSTRUCTION-QUALITY-WORKMANSHIP EVALUATION

Quality of fiberglass lay-up	10
Mold detail and finish	10
Gel coat/paint finish	10
Placement and quality of deck hardware	8
Placement of instruments and controls	6
Steering system	8
Throttle controls	8
Installation and neatness of electrical wiring	4
Overall engine installation	9
Installation of fuel tanks	10
Seat padding	7
Access to minor services	10

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

LOW SPEED

Tracking	10
Throttle response	8
Shifting of passenger weight	9
Docking maneuverability	7
Visibility	10
Ease of boarding and debarking	8
Noise level (in cockpit)	67 dB(A)

CRUISE SPEED

Tracking	8
Throttle response	8
Slalom course at 20 mph	5
Slalom course at 30 mph	5
Slalom course at 40 mph	7
Wake jump	7

HIGH SPEED

Tracking	7
Throttle response	7
Right turn	6
Left turn	7
Visibility	10
Noise level (in cockpit)	89 dB(A)

WATER SKI EVALUATION

Take-off power	10
Tracking consistency of hull	10
Throttle sensitivity	9
Visibility coming on plane	10
Visibility at speed	10
Wake	9
Ease of boarding and debarking	7

