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LARRY KEAN

THE 16' JOHNSON SEASPORT II

# THE 16' JOHNSON SEASPORT II

BY LARRY KEAN AND DICK RATH

*A seagoing sports car, Seasport II boasts snappy performance, spacious accommodations, top-notch construction.*

We found the test boat tied up to the gas dock at Lauderdale Marina, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and at first glance she looked more like a sports car than a boat. If you're a traditionalist, this is bound to prejudice you against the boat—until you go aboard, check the details and quality of construction, and take her out for a run. Even a traditionalist will come back convinced that there's really no reason why this high quality floating sport machine *should* look like Ahab's gig. It looks, and performs, like a high quality floating sport machine.

We cast off and headed for the measured half-mile in New River, about 5 miles away, past some of Fort Lauderdale's fanciest residential waterfront. The "No Wake" rule is well enforced here, and we tried to hold the Seasport back, but it isn't easy—the speedometer doesn't even read below 10 mph, and somehow it's a big temptation to push that throttle forward. At 1500 rpm she does about 7 mph, and in truth she kicks up more wake at that speed than she does flat out, but the "No Wake" rule is at least partly psychological, and it didn't seem wise to go tooling through these waterways at 35 or 40 mph.

During our leisurely run up New River, we took a careful look at the boat. Forward of the walk-through windshield is a commodious cockpit, with a neat tonneau cover that stows under a boot in the bow. The fuel tank is under the forward seat, and a small locker under the starboard seat. Hand rails, port and starboard on the gunwale, wrap-around the corners of the bow. When the center portion of the windshield is open it may be fastened back against the fixed side portion to port, and with the tonneau cover off the forward cockpit there's an abundance of ventilation.

The helmsman's seat is to starboard, where it should be, and the single lever throttle and shift control is located comfortably to the right of the helmsman's knee, easily accessible but in little danger of being accidentally bumped. The automotive type steering wheel has an adjustable rudder angle indicator. Above are temperature and oil pressure lights, ignition/starter switch, and lighter. To the right are switches for the combination bilge pump and blower, drive unit tilt mechanism, running and anchor lights, instrument lights, and interior light. The

## SPECIFICATIONS

### Dimensions:

Length overall . . . . .	16'2½"	Draft (unit down) . . . . .	2'4"
Waterline length . . . . .	14'2"	Freeboard forward . . . . .	2'6"
Beam . . . . .	7'1"	Freeboard aft . . . . .	21½"

**Hull Weight:** With 120 hp Johnson sterndrive unit, 1900 lbs. With 155 hp Johnson sterndrive unit, 2000 lbs.

**Safe Load Capacity:** Six 170 lb persons, or 1400 lbs for persons and gear.

**Maximum Horsepower:** Single 155 hp sterndrive unit.

**Accommodations:** Two pairs of back-to-back bucket seats, twin jump seats aft, and cushioned forward cockpit.

**Standard Equipment:** Inland Rule navigation lights; anchor light; electric horn; engine compartment ventilation system with blower, motor box supply port, and twin exhaust cowls fitted with 2 ¾" dia flexible hoses; chrome-plated bow rails; chrome-over-brass deck hardware includes two 7" bow cleats, two 7" quarter cleats, forward lifting eye; two lifting or ski eyes on transom, and a trailer bow eye; aluminum-framed, three-section walk-through windshield with tinted tempered safety plate glass; exclusive sunscreen band on glass; convertible soft top with padded boot; forward cockpit cover; padded glove compartment with lock; forward stowage compartment; four after stowage compartments, two with removable coolers; side stowage compartments for water-ski or fishing gear; instrument panel with tachometer, speedometer, fuel gauge, ammeter, and horn button; switch panel with ignition switch, bilge pump and blower switch, motor tilt and light switches, oil pressure and overheat warning lights, cigarette lighter and spare switch; master electrical disconnect switch; 12 v electrical system; terminal strip with nine glass fuses; 12 v battery; automotive-type steering wheel with rudder angle indicator; cable and pulley steering system; single-lever controls with electric power shift; 16 galterne plate fuel tank; copper tubing fuel lines.

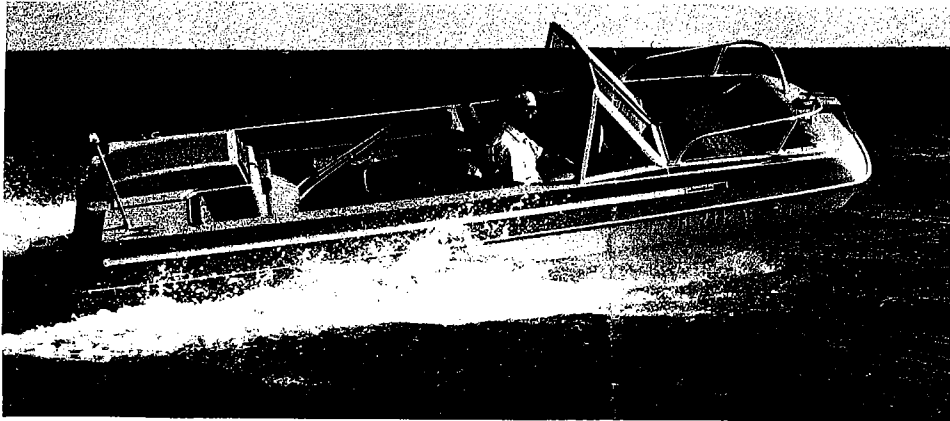
**Construction:** One-piece hull of fiberglass, hand lay-up of chopped strand and woven roving. Two layer forward bottom and topsides, average thickness .218" (one layer 3 oz blown in chopped strand and one layer of 16 oz woven roving). Three-layer after bottom, average thickness .247" (one layer 3 oz chopped strand and two layers of 16 oz roving). Bottom stiffened by twin longitudinals (three plies of ¾" waterproof plywood glued and fastened together to form a 2¼" thick member). Transverse floors of ¾" waterproof plywood. Structure filled with about 29 cu ft of 3 lb density foamed-in-place flotation with a positive lift of about 1700 lbs in fresh water.

**Propulsion and Performance:** See page 66.

**Price:** With above equipment and 120 hp sterndrive, \$4150 FOB Waukegan, Ill. Test boat with above equipment and optional 155 sterndrive, \$4525 FOB Waukegan, Ill.

**Designers:** OMC Boats Division for Johnson Motors under the direction of Ralph Lambrecht. Styling by Myron Stevens, boat stylist for OMC.

**Builder:** OMC Boats Division for Johnson Motors, Waukegan, Ill. 60085



*Spacious cockpit highlights Johnson's Seasport II. Back-to-back bucket seats convert to full length sunning lounges, and rail-protected forward cockpit will seat two or three. Note neat stowage of navy top and bow cover.*

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gauges are arranged vertically to the right of the switch panel, tachometer on top, then speedometer and combination gas gauge and ammeter. The horn button is below the gauges, thus close to the throttle. A master electrical disconnect switch is concealed below the dash.

The bucket seats on both sides are attached to bucket seats facing aft, and the whole seat unit adjusts to various positions, including a very comfortable stretch-out lounge position—great for sunbathing, sleeping, or whatever. These foam-filled seats are contoured and waterproof—which means that they'll be puddle collectors, but that's a small price to pay for comfort and convenience.

Two jump seats aft flank the elegant engine box (which looks like anything but an engine box), and under each jump seat is a removable insulated cooler.

The white vinyl convertible top stows under a boot in front of these seats. Later, when we tried putting the top up, we were impressed with the thought that obviously had gone into its design, and were equally impressed with the high quality of its manufacture. This high quality, it should be noted, prevails throughout the boat and its accessories.

After we put the boat through its paces on the measured half-mile, we headed out through Port Everglades Inlet to see how she would behave in the short chop that was running in the Atlantic. The Seasport lived up to her name—she was a lot more fun in a three-foot chop than she was in smooth water, and no matter how we tried we couldn't get her to do anything wrong. Perhaps because of the configuration of the gunwales (she looks absolutely rectangular from the helmsman's seat), we had the feeling that she might trip, so we spent some time jumping into tight turns to see if she would. She wouldn't.

She was a dry boat, and virtually foolproof, at least in a three-foot chop. After two hours of slamming her around, the biggest fault we could find was that the rather lightweight catch on the windshield occasionally came undone. And this loomed out of proportion, because the rest of the boat's hardware is so good.

Johnson's attention to detail is apparent in the 40-page owner's manual the company supplies with the boat. It's easily the best owner's manual to come along since Volkswagen's—and it gives the impression that Johnson really cares how boat and owner get along together.

Back at Lauderdale Marina, we tied the Seasport up and stood on the gas dock looking at her. She still looked more like sports car than boat, but she had earned our respect by her performance this day. And her high quality construction made us very curious to see the plant where she was built.

A few days before Christmas, surrounded by a blue haze of "Jack Benny comes from there" comments, we slung our trusty Pentax over our trusty shoulder and boarded a jet for Waukegan, Ill., to see the Seasport II production facilities.

After passing a few security checks we were admitted to the posh engineering offices of the OMC Boats Division. We have had less trouble getting into the Navy's Bureau of Ships.

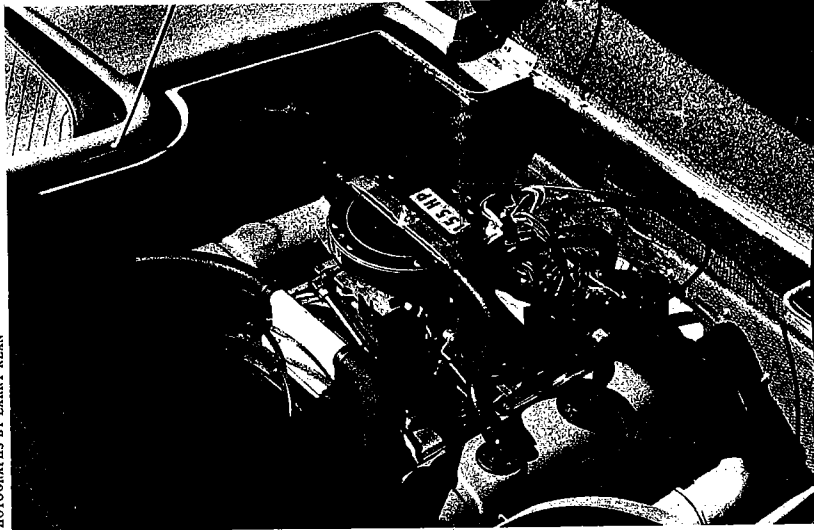
Two staff members—Administrative Engineer Bob Bergquist and Naval Designer Lars Granholm—conducted us through the plant. . . .

The production building, all 235,000 sq ft of it, is a fascinating place. It is very much like an automobile plant with bits and pieces traveling overhead on conveyors. A steady stream of brown cardboard cartons was running overhead from one end of the plant to the other. We were nosy enough to ask what they contained. Glass thread, we were told: this is how all the boats produced here start. We followed the cartons to a spinning machine that produces a glass yarn for the giant looms that weave 16 oz roving and tapes. This is the only builder that we know of who weaves his own materials. Why?, we asked. In spite of the high initial investment in machinery, the finished product is cheaper than ready-made and, what is most important, quality is controlled and consistent.

With this nugget of information tucked away we had a look at the hull production line. Here an overhead conveyor carries a number of hull molds suspended in gimbaled racks that permit excellent ac-

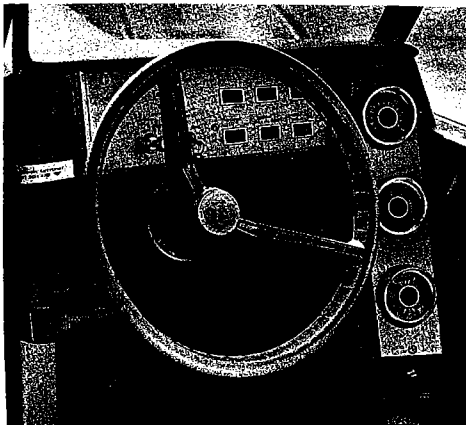
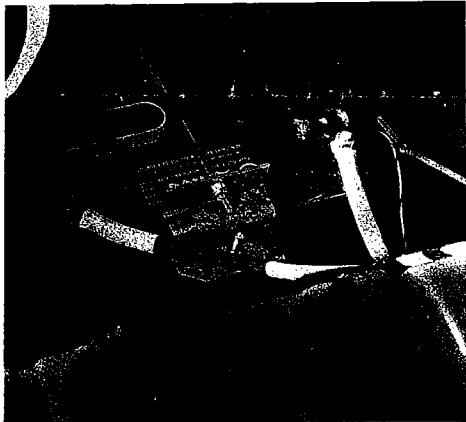
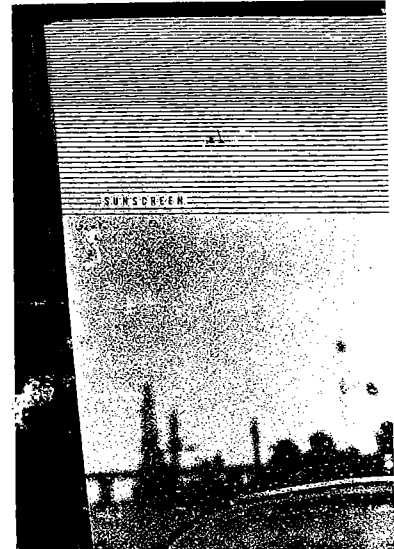


Ample stowage spaces (left) are concealed by after seat cushions. Removable foam coolers are standard equipment. . . Well insulated engine compartment (below) holds noise level of optional 155 hp V-6 engine well within acceptable level. Ventilation air is supplied through open front of cover, exhaust is by twin ducts and cowls on transom. Blower and bilge pump are standard equipment.

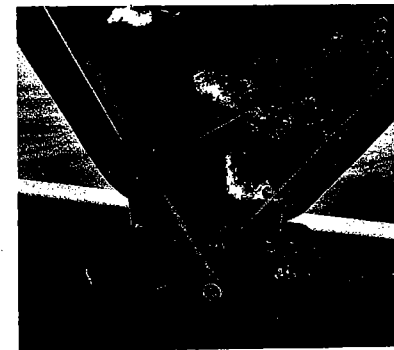
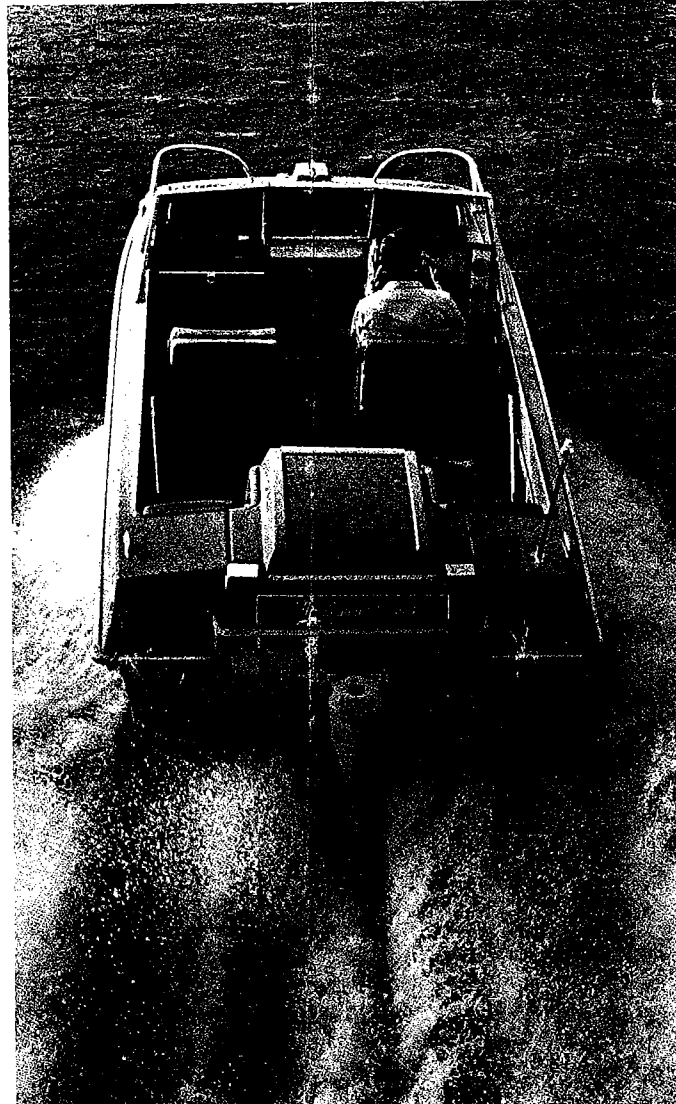


PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARRY KEAN

(Below) Three section pass-through windshield framed in anodized aluminum. Unique tinted safety glass provides effective glare reduction with series of silk-screened lines that vary in width and spacing.



Battery hold-downs (top) are first class. . . protective cover has been removed. Vertical instrument cluster (above) includes tach, speedometer, and fuel gauge. Electrical panel is above wheel.



(Above) Lack of thumb-screws, bolts, and other troublesome gadgets, makes Seasport's coated vinyl convertible top a joy to operate. All metal parts are smooth anodized aluminum. . . Deck details (left) and back-to-back bucket seats are shown in this 35 mph running shot.

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cess to the interior. After cleaning and polishing, the molds are sprayed with a 15 mil gel coat followed by a 15 mil back-up layer that prevents print-through of the woven fabric. A glass chopper comes into play and deposits a 3 oz per sq ft layer of chopped glass strand. At the next station a layer of 16 oz woven roving is applied to the mold. Highly stressed areas—the afterbody, chines, centerline and sheer—are further reinforced with additional roving and tape.

Fiberglass work completed, the hull is ready for its internal reinforcement, a pair of longitudinal members that stiffen the bottom and act as engine mounts. The longitudinal members plus three transverse floors form a ten-compartment bottom structure with an average depth of eight inches.

The hull, with wooden structure in place, is moved to a giant dial-a-boat foaming machine. This magic gadget, over 20 feet high, spews forth a foam mix to fill the bottom void. The operator stands before a control panel and dials the appropriate amount of

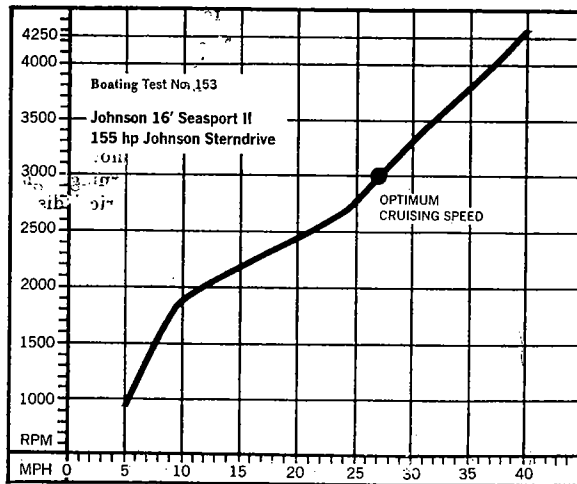
### Propulsion:

**Standard power:** 120 hp Johnson 4 cyl-in-line gasoline engine with 153 cu in piston displacement; 3.88" bore x 3.25" stroke; Johnson sterndrive unit with .62:1 ratio; power tilt; 14" x 16" three-bladed propeller.

**Optional power:** 155 hp Johnson V-6 gasoline engine with 225 cu in piston displacement; 3.75" bore x 3.40" stroke; Johnson sterndrive unit with .62:1 ratio; power tilt; 14" x 18" three-bladed propeller.

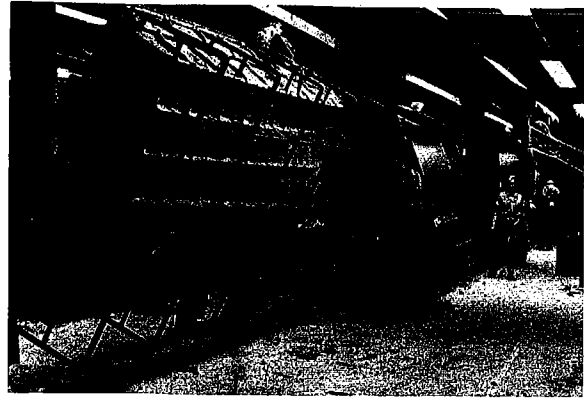
*Test boat equipped with 155 hp Johnson sterndrive.*

### Performance Curve\*



\*Speeds based on clocked times over one-half statute mile course with two persons, test equipment, and 16 gals of fuel on board. Fuel consumption measured by Brooks Instrument flowmeter. Engine rpm determined with Merc-O-Tronic tachometer.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARRY KEAN



Hull molds are gimballed for easy access to interior, and move along production line merry-go-round fashion.

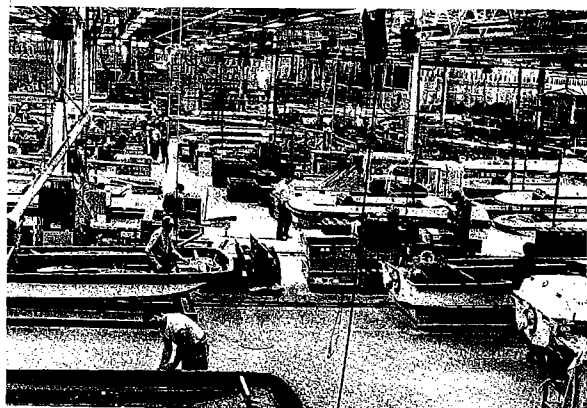
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foam for each of the several models built by OMC. The Seasport II receives about 29 cu ft of foam, which provides about 1700 lbs of positive flotation in fresh water.

Decks, produced on an upper level, meet hulls at the assembly area where engines, controls, fuel system, and electrical system are installed. The OMC electrical system is one of the best we have seen—wiring is neat and each circuit is fused or fitted with a circuit breaker. The fuses are readily available behind the switch panel; you can gain access to them by removing two screws (a coin will do the trick if a screwdriver is not at hand).

Quality control plays a large part in the production of these boats. Plugs, for example, are taken from the production line every day and sent to the lab where they are tested for physical properties and checked for glass/resin content. This system gives the plant manager an accurate picture of each day's production in terms of glass and resin usage and, in turn, strength.

The whole operation is a far cry from the old traditional boatbuilder's shop, but the Seasport II is a far cry from the old traditional boatbuilder's boats. And in her own way, she's better conceived and executed than many a salty, traditional hull of yesteryear. To judge by the number of Seasports pouring out of this super-automated Waukegan plant, a lot of American boatmen think so too. ⚓



Main assembly area in 235,000 sq ft Waukegan plant where decks, power plants, and the accessories are installed.