THE 44 EASTBAY SX FROM GRAND BANKS FEATURES A WISH LIST OF MODERN BOAT-BUILDING MATERIALS, TOP-NOTCH ANCILLARIES, A PRECISELY POSITIONED LCG, AND SUPERB HANDLING UNDER ROUGH-AND-READY CONDITIONS. BY CAPT. BILL PIKE

GRAND BANKS 44 EASTBAY SX

LOA: 48’9”
BEAM: 14’7”
DRAFT: 3’3”
DISPL.: 39,600 lb.
FUEL: 488 gal.
WATER: 194 gal.
TEST POWER: 2 x 435-hp Volvo Penta IPS600s
TRANSMISSION: Volvo Penta IPS; 1.82:1 gear ratio
PROPELLERS: IPS-F
OPTIONAL POWER: N/A
GENERATOR: 11.2-kW AC 52 Mini Fischer Panda
WARRANTY: 2-year stem-to-stern warranty from Grand Banks, plus a 5-year warranty on engines, gear, and structure
BASE PRICE: $1,190,000
I’d just finished zooming around the open Atlantic for an hour or so (an experience I’d treated myself to once I’d finished officially sea-trialing our Grand Banks 44 Eastbay SX test boat), when the boat’s owner, Mike Ostrow, said, “Okay, Bill—so why don’t you run her back through the inlet? I’d like your impressions.” “Sure,” I replied. “Let’s see what she’ll do.” Conditions at the time were fairly mild offshore. The wind was wooing out of the southeast at 10 to 15 knots, pushing herds of humble 1- to 2-footers, with a few frothy whitecaps here and there. The sun was shining. The sky was blue. It was nice—real nice. But the inlet Ostrow was referring to?

**Virtues of Flexibility**

Hillsboro Inlet is shallow, narrow, and sometimes dangerous, particularly when a reusing tidal current issues forth against a torrent of incoming seas, which was what was happening at present. The dastardly trend tends to build short, steep, precipitous waves within its rock-encrusted confines and, under certain unsavory circumstances, these waves can slow a boat sideways, roll her over, or even cause her to pitchpole if her nose slams the bottom.

But based on my recent driving experiences, I had lots of confidence in the Volvo Penta IPS-powered 44. Certainly her 32.8-knot top end was solid, as were her pod-related fuel efficiencies. But what was even more confidence-inspiring were her running attitudes. Essentially, the boat achieved plane (via a bow rise of just 1.5 degrees) at about 1500 rpm without actually “coming out of the hole.” And then she stayed on plane with an optimal running attitude of just 3.5 degrees, which she achieved at 2000 rpm and maintained steadfastly throughout the rest of the register.

What did all this mean? For starters, the 44 was perfectly balanced in terms of her longitudinal center of gravity or LCG, no doubt partly due to the way Grand Banks uses short jackshafts to impart a weight-forward bias to engine placement. Indeed, according to the company, the precise location of the boat’s engines and drive units had taken total precedence during her design and construction over the configuration of her living spaces, which had essentially been “built around” the mechanics, an approach that was responsible for her perfect LCG placement as well as a host of other engineering- and performance-related virtues. But while these happy cir-

Look comfy? The master’s mattress is 8 inches thick and topped with memory foam. A hatch overhead has an Oceanair screen and shade.
cumstances were undeniably good, they engendered another that was even better: unbridled, throttle-related flexibility. Once com-
mitted to Hillsboro, I knew I’d be able to throttle up or down at will, without affecting the boat’s super-poi ned trim. And this would allow me to use just the right amount of oomph, precisely when I needed it, without risking the loss of directionality that an overly bow-up or bow-down orientation can cause.

Hang On—Here We Go!
I isolated past the sea buoy, headed approximately northwest, doing 20 knots or so, and then slowed down considerably while scouting an opportunity to ease up the back of an inbound wave. Of course, doing such a thing, especially when fighting an outgoing tide, re-
quires concentration—you need to keep track of where your nav
ers. When we hit the flat water just inside Hillsboro’s southern jetty,

Top-Shell Construction and Anciliaries
It was obvious from my subsequent dockside tour that the 44 ben-
efits from the boatbuilding methods espoused by Mark Richards,
who heads up both Grand Banks Yachts and its sister company, Palm Beach Motor Yachts. Richards favors the latest in E-glass, vinylester resins (throughout the laminate, not just on the exterior surfaces), stitched multi-axial fabrics, and lightweight Corecell linear-foam coring materials. And he’s also into what Grand Banks calls a “monocoque” ap-
proach to construction, meaning that in addition to all the compos-

Grand Banks Yachts, 616-499-2519; www.grandbanks.com

Whale Marine quick-connect fittings and color-coordinated water lines, was thoughtfully installed and easy to identify at a glance. And what’s more, the electricians did a fantastic job; spiral-wrapped, ap-
propriately sized, tin-plated copper wiring throughout was teamed with a 15-kilowatt Fischer Panda genset; a ProNautic 12/10P char-
gger for the genset battery; a ProNautic 24/30P charger for main bat-\ntery banks; a top-shelf 2000-watt Magnum inverter, and an array of
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Teaky, Tricky, Teaky
The 44’s salon invites fresh air. More to the point, the aforemen-
tioned, electrically actuated side and rear windows, when lowered, bring the outdoors instantaneously inside, especially when the back
door and the big hatches in the hardtop are open as well. And the lay-
out only enhances the theme, with an ample U-shaped settee to port with dining table), a galley up to starboard (with an induction cook-
top, a refer, a sink, and a picture-window view), and a helm station

I mean, she tracks like a bullet. And the power—there’s where you
need it. And we really needed it a couple of times back there.”

Docking the 44 behind Ostrów’s house revealed another perfor-
mance-related feature—the wide offset between her IPS drive units
steadily expands her maneuvering leverage and reduces the thrust
(turbulence) necessary to produce said leverage. Using a well-
calibrated joystick (meaning the movements of the stick and the
boat itself were synthesized closely), I pivoted the 44 easily within
her own length and then walked her smoothly into an altogether ber-
hull with absolutely no raking, no gear clashing, no drama.

The 44 came through with flying colors, thanks not only to her
balanced, true-tracking, full-keeled, deep-V hullform, but also to the

to storage and appliance options.

Grand Banks 44 EASTBAY SX

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<th>NOTEWORTHY OPTIONS:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Splendide washer-dryer combo ($3,770); optional three-cabin layout ($10,000); Seakeeper 5 gyro stabilizer ($4,400); Garmin electronics package ($30,000)</td>
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