



POWER
& MOTORYACHT

PERFECT COMPROMISE

WHETHER YOU'RE FISHING THE OPEN WATERS OF THE GULF OF MEXICO OR
PLANNING A WEEKEND'S WORTH OF WATER SPORTS,
THE REGULATOR 26XO HAS YOU COVERED.
BY CAPT. BILL PIKE

LOA: 26'9"
Beam: 9'3"
Draft (engine up): 1'2"
Displ.: 5,900 lbs.
Fuel: 107 gal.
Water: 20 gal.
Test Power: 1/300-hp Yamaha F300s
Price: \$134,000



If there's a subject that truly complexifies a boat tester's existence, scheduling's gotta be it. Shoot, you'd think that, even in this imperfect world, sea trialing a fine little crossover center console like Regulator's 26XO would be comparatively straightforward, especially since the boat, her skipper and a whole pile of fishable water lay only 150 miles west of my North Florida home. But here's the deal: As soon as I tried to come up with a date, I discovered I was booked solid. The skipper, Chris Sailors of Gregg Orr Marine in Destin, Florida, was booked solid. And, due to upcoming boat shows, the boat was booked solid, too.

So, the way things turned out, I had one day—just one particular day—to get the 26 launched on Chocktawhatchee Bay, squeeze all the pertinent test data out of her and her 300-hp Yamaha F300 outboard and, last but not least, check out her touted piscatorial potential. This was altogether doable, it seemed to me, except for one final detail: the skipper's wife, Lee, had a scheduling issue of her own. She was on the verge of giving birth to the couple's second child. And I do mean, the verge!

"But Monday—yeah, that'll be okay," said Sailors, the young, expectant father, as we finalized arrangements on the phone. "She isn't due until the end of the week, maybe like Thursday or Friday."

It was early when we slid the 26 into the water at the Joe's Bayou boat ramp on test day. The weather was fine—hardly a cloud in the sky. And within an hour or so, we were hovering above a near-shore fishing hole in the Gulf of Mexico called Urchin Reef while enjoying one of our test boat's nifty options—a Minn Kota Riptide Ultrerra trolling motor with i-Pilot and Bluetooth capabilities.

Remember how it was in the old days? When bottom fishing over a wreck or reef meant dropping the hook at least once, but more likely several times over, in order to zero in? Sailors was trouncing this antique approach with a handheld wireless remote that essentially turned the Minn Kota on the bow into a GPS-governed electronic anchor. He'd started by directing the unit to swing itself overboard (which it did with robotic flair), then he'd begun quietly steering us to the exact spot he wanted us to be. And then finally, he'd tapped "ANCHOR," a move that was holding us in place via a pod-type propulsion unit that rotated through 360 degrees while continuously modifying thrust.

"Guess you got cellphone coverage out here, Chris," I ventured, while baiting a circle hook with a chunk of squid. "In case we gotta run for the hospital. You never know."

"Yeah," replied Sailors, "It'll be okay."

I thumbed my Shimano Tekota 800 reel until the sinker hit bottom and then pulled the rig up a couple of feet to wait while the Minn



Seatbacks fold to create a casting platform. Underneath are lockers (outboard) and access to mechanicals like trim tab and washdown pumps.

Kota emitted an occasional, soft whir in the background. Ah, the GPS-infused trolling motor—what a trip! Especially for old guys like me who used to pull the anchor umpteen-million times on any given Saturday afternoon. While dabbling in 50 or 60 feet of water. Time chugged along. We caught a few fish, both Sailors and I, not only at Urchin Reef but also at two subsequent offshore locations, both well within cellphone range. And this exercise, when teamed up with the impressions I'd formed earlier while driving out to Urchin, helped me better understand what the folks at Regulator were looking for when they asked their designer, Lou Codega, to come up with Regulator's very first crossover design. Certainly, the essence of it all was compromise; indeed, Codega himself will tell you the 26 is his version of the "ultimate center-console compromise." For starters, she's half flats boat, with two casting platforms, one forward and the other aft, and a skinny-water draft of just 14 inches with the jack-plated Yammy tilted up. But then again, she's also half offshore sea chomper, with ample locking rod storage, a nicely plumbed livewell, tackle center, in-deck fishboxes and numerous other fish-fighting standards and options. Of course, there are drawbacks to such a mixture. The boat's running surface (with a 17-degree transom deadrise) is flatter than the running surfaces of Regulator's other, offshore-ready sportfishing machines, most of which sport sharp, deep-V transom deadrises of 24 degrees or thereabouts. So yeah, you can use the 26 to fish the wild blue yonder on a nice summer day but you want to keep tabs on the weather. Without the wave-slicing prowess of a deep-V hullform and the towering, hip-high gunwales that tend to typify most true, offshore center consoles, the advent of big seas will likely make the

trip back to the inlet wet and rough. But compromise has its charms, too. A flatter bottom means less draft and more transverse stability—while we were fishing I found that Sailors and I could move around on board the 26 without experiencing any deep-V-type tippiness at all. Combine this sort of virtue with an optional 10-foot Blade power pole (or the Minn Kota for deeper water) and you've got yourself a genuine, sport-utility vessel, equally at home hunting reds with a fly rod in the backcountry or, like Sailors and I were doing, plumbing the depths. Toss in a family-friendly feature or two (like a standup head compartment with an electric MSD and 13-gallon holding tank and an optional water sports tow bar) and you're fishing on Saturday and having fun with the family on Sunday. "Got one," I yelled. I'd been leaning against the console, waiting for a bite, but now I had both knees against the coaming bolster on the port side, my left hand in lift mode and my right hand cranking away. "Cool," Sailors noted as I pulled another medium-sized snapper aboard. To be truthful, I wasn't immediately sure whether he was commenting upon the assurances he'd just received from his wife or my continuing success on the catch-and-release front. Maybe it was both. During the run back to Chocktawhatchee Bay, the 26 evinced the stalwart ride that Regulator's been famous for since its founding some three decades ago. Once Sailors and I'd polished off our last stop—an artificial reef called The Frangista Beach Culverts—it was way late, the wind was blowing 20-plus knots and we still had test data to record. So, in spite of our decision to take a pass



There's no anchoring necessary thanks to this Bluetooth remote.

on backcountry flyfishing (at best challenging under such sporty conditions), our return trip to Joe's Bayou needed to be, shall we say, expedited. The jaunt that ensued was instructive. Although our boat's port side was under constant attack from brawling 3-to-4-foot seas all the way back to Destin's East Pass jetties, with smithereens of spray blasting aboard with regularity, our speed never slipped below a steady 22 knots and our compass heading hardly wavered more than a few degrees. "This baby's got some serious heft," I remarked at one point, giving Sailors a grin of appreciation for the way the 26's juggernaut-like 5,900-pound displacement beelined the side seas. The performance numbers we subsequently got on the bay—which featured virtually the same sea conditions we'd been experiencing on the Gulf—only served to reinforce this opinion. Certainly, there are some competing center consoles in the 26's size range on the market these days that'll beat 38.5 knots on smooth water, but how many of them can generate the same sort of confidence-inspiring, true tracking ride at medium speeds once things roughen up a tad? When Sailors and I parted company at the boat ramp that evening he asked me what I thought of the 26XO. "She's a pretty boat—lovely lines," I replied. "She's a sort of SUV or a pocket pickup truck—useful in many ways." Then I asked a favor: "Boy or girl? Please lemme know." "A boy! It's a boy," he said when we finally connected several weeks later. "And his name is James Tucker Sailors. And guess what, Bill. I gotta tell ya, man. He's already been for a boat ride." □



TEST REPORT

	RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
SEAS: 3-4 ft.	600	2.3	0.6	410	65
	1000	4.0	1.2	357	70
	2000	7.4	3.7	214	76
FUEL: 1/4 Full	3000	10.3	7.8	141	89
	4000	22.2	12.3	193	92
	5000	31.7	22.5	150	93
WATER: Empty	5850	38.5	26.5	155	93