



Salt Water

SPORTSMAN

Regulator 26X0

A venerable center-console builder enters the inshore market with a superb new crossover model.

By Gary Caputi

THE REGULATOR NAME IS SYNONYMOUS WITH TOP CENTER-CONSOLE FISHING BOATS, SO WHEN RUMORS OF A NEW MODEL SURFACED PRIOR TO THE MIAMI BOAT SHOW, A BIGGER OFFSHORE PLATFORM IMMEDIATELY CAME TO MIND. BUT INSTEAD, [THE BUILDER LAUNCHED A SURPRISING 26-FOOT CROSSOVER MODEL](#) COMPLETE WITH JACK PLATE, SHALLOW-WATER ANCHOR, AND TROLLING MOTOR TO HANDLE BACKCOUNTRY AND COASTAL PURSUITS.

I met Mike DeFrancesco from Yacht Works, the Florida Keys Regulator dealer, and factory rep Bob Bissinger in Tavernier, Florida, for a tour of the new boat and some fishing with Capt. Tim Arce of Native Conch Charters. First impressions are lasting, and the 26XO did not disappoint. It’s a beautiful boat, and even with the low freeboard and front and rear casting platforms, it’s immediately recognizable as a Regulator.

Over two days, I had the opportunity to fish the boat outside and in the backcountry, and the XO lived up to its crossover name. The Lou Codega-designed hull captures the famous Regulator ride, yet it draws only 14 inches of water (engine up) and has 17 degrees of deadrise, compared with 24 on its offshore siblings.

We ran the boat from Snake Creek in Islamorada to Davis Reef, directly into 3- to 4-foot swells with some chop thrown in, which the XO handled beautifully, cruising between 27 and 32 mph at a yield of 1.7 to 2 mpg. Though we crested several larger waves, the boat’s sharp entry always provided a smooth re-entry. Despite the moderate chop, the ride was also quite dry. What little spray made it over the gunwales was intercepted by the three-sided glass console enclosure.

TEST CONDITIONS

WEATHER

Sunny

LOCATION

Tavernier, Florida

WIND

East 10 knots

SEA STATE

Backcountry, mild chop; ocean, 2 to 4 feet

TEST LOAD

Two adults, 50 gallons of fuel, 20 gallons of water

LENGTH: 26'9"	BEAM: 9'3"	DRAFT: 14"	DEADRISE: 17 degrees	FUEL: 107 gal.	FRESH WATER: 20 gal.
WEIGHT: 5,900 lb. w/power	MAX HP: 300	PRICE: \$134,995 w/ Yamaha F300	REGULATOR MARINE: regulatormarine.com		



After chumming for yellowtail and mangrove snapper, and catching a few nice ones, I ran the boat back with the seas astern and quartering. Bringing it up to 40 mph at times, the hull easily climbed on top of the chop, keeping the ride comfortable. Turning into hard corners proved effortless, and so did navigating the twisting channel as we approached the cut at the southern end of Plantation Key.



On day two, we headed to the backcountry accompanied by Arce and his neighbor Lexi. Once we topped off the fuel tank, we went Gulf-side and crossed many miles of Florida Bay shallows to fish for a mixed bag of jacks, Spanish mackerel and snapper. The standard Yamaha F300 provided a good combination of speed and fuel economy, and proved a fine matchup for the hull for comfortably eating up



④ A hydraulic jack plate and Power-Pole shallow-water anchor are among the desirable options. ② The dash affords plenty of room for electronics, gauges, stereo and more. ③ Port and starboard seats bookend the forward casting deck. Fold-away backrests turn them into loungers. the miles. We reached a top-end speed of 45 mph then cruised at 4,500 rpm, maintaining a quick clip of 35 mph

while burning about 16 gph. I should point out, however, that the 26XO I tested was the very first hull built, and Regulator was still in the process of tweaking it to achieve maximum performance. Once we arrived at our first stop in the backcountry, we switched to electric power, using the optional Minn Kota Ulterra — powered by three deep-cycle batteries stored beneath the forward casting deck — to hold our position. The trolling motor handled the load adequately, moving the boat from point to point at a fast pace, even into a 10-plus-knot breeze. The Power-Pole, another top option, also performed well. It kept us staked out in water as deep as 10 feet. Meanwhile, the hull proved a stable fishing platform. With all three people on board standing on one side, leaning was minimal. Paying special attention to the boat's handling characteristics on

the ride back, I noticed the power steering is responsive with positive feedback, and the standard SeaStar jack plate and engine trim make it easy to traverse skinny water by raising the motor. As on every Regulator model, the list of features is long. The large hardtop provides plenty of shade, and there is comfortable seating for up to seven when running, and for even more at rest. The deck layout is excellent. It incorporates an expansive forward casting platform, and a rear platform with three fold-down jump seats and two large storage compartments below. There's a 32-gallon livewell

and tackle center in the twin helm-seat base, a drink box under the forward console seats, a 280-quart in-deck fish box, and plenty of stowage forward, including two locking compartments that hold rods up to 7 feet in length. And I can't forget the pop-up seat backs, which provide lounge seating on the bow. Regulator designed and built the 26XO in response to requests from its owner base for a shallow-water platform. In my estimation, the builder hit a home run. The new crossover covers all the bases, and is sure to garner serious interest from potential owners who want to partake of fishing inside and out. ☘

PERFORMANCE

OPTIMAL CRUISE
With a Yamaha F300, the 26 XO reaches 28.8 mph at 4,000 rpm, with a mileage of 2.3 mpg.

RPM	MPH	GPH
3,500	15.7	9.9
4,000	28.8	12.2
4,500	34.3	16.0
5,500	43.0	25.2
5,900	45.5	26.5

Fishing for Adventure[®]

With Texas Insider Fishing Report

Hosts Capt. Rick Murphy, Brie Gabrielle and Dave Ferrell team up with six of Texas's top-rated guides for current inshore and offshore regional reports.

Each 60-minute show airs before the weekend to give you the inside scoop on:

- Where the fish are biting
- Weather and water conditions
- Fish facts, habits and hideouts
- Bait, tackle and techniques
- Conservation updates

Catch us weekly on

FOX SPORTS SOUTHWEST

April to September

- ★ Thursday, 10:30 p.m.
- ★ Friday, 7 a.m. & 5 p.m.
- ★ Saturday, 7 a.m.

Prefer to watch Texas Insider Fishing Report on your digital device? Go to Fox Sports Go or YouTube.

TexasInsiderFishingReport.com

@TIFRtv @TIFRtv TXInsiderFishReport Texas Insider Fishing Report

WE WANT YOUR BOAT LOAN

Phil Hawkins Leigh Ackerman Walter Martinez

STERLING ASSOCIATES

25 YEARS IN BUSINESS

STERLING ASSOCIATES

>>> **Rates as low as 4.50%**

Need a boat loan? Talk to the Pros. We offer boat and yacht loans at the lowest possible rates while providing the professional, personalized financial service you deserve.

Contact Us Today... Our People Make the Difference!

Contact the boat loan PROFESSIONALS • (800) 286-7771 • boatbanker.com