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Lakeland BOATING

OCTOBER 2020

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GRAND BANKS 54

CONFIDENCE FROM THE HULL UP. BY CAPT. TOM SERIO



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GRAND BANKS

From the “If I wasn’t there, I wouldn’t believe it” files. Case study: The brand-new Grand Banks 54 (GB54). The situation: Sea trial. The location: Palm Beach, Florida. The victims: A bunch of journalists who were about to get the surprise no one expected.

Now, that may sound very innocent but let me tell you the tale.

Arriving at the marina to a brilliant white flybridge cabin cruiser, I recognized my ride by the signature Grand Banks downeaster-style hull with upturned peak, lapstrake hull and teak trim. With a steady yet strong easterly blow, I knew the waters would be choppy but nothing this yacht can’t handle. Well, I was wrong but then, I was right.

Upon casting off, our Grand Banks tour guide/captain du jour, Hank Compton, managing director for Grand Banks and basically a walking encyclopedia of everything GB, deftly guided the quick-responding GB54 off the dock and toward the channel.

A THREE-HOUR TOUR

While heading toward the inlet, Compton detailed the construction of the yacht. Vacuum-infused E-glass and carbon fiber are used in the hull layup, hardtop, bulkheads and even furniture. The deck and superstructure are fully infused carbon fiber. Corcell and Airex foams are used for coring materials. Components like the bulkheads and stringers are structurally bonded to the hull, reducing the overall weight of the vessel while maintaining strength and stiffness.

That critical construction and strength of the hull was proven during our run. Showing that the 51,800-pound GB54 tops out at just over 30 knots (seven persons, one-third fuel and half water load onboard), we headed out to the open ocean for more speed runs.

And that’s when it happened. Heading outbound with the ripping current, the very fresh winds were building the opposing seas. Any seasoned boater would know that wind against current creates daunting conditions, but we expected that. What I/we were wrong about was just how fast they would build, even if just for a short distance.



VICTORY AT SEA

Piloting from the lower helm, which offers 360-degree visibility thanks to the large forward and salon windows, we went from 2- to 4- to 6-foot standing waves on the nose. Suddenly, like from a scene in the movie "The Perfect Storm," Compton, with all the coolness of George Clooney, casually braced as the GB54 climbed up one wave that seemed to be as tall as Mt. Everest (really only about 8 feet) and into the frothy abyss below.

This is where the GB54 shined like a beacon in the mist. As we dropped into the trough, we all collectively expected a bone jarring crash that would jostle us out of our shoes. But nothing came. We expected moans and groans from the hull. Again, nothing. No creaks, cracks, shakes, or shimmies. Nothing! Just a very solid ride under our feet that had us all amazed. Lesser boats would have had us hanging on for dear life. Not on the GB54. Taking a bit of spray and wash, the GB54 rose up, ready to take the next cresting wave.

This was not by accident. Grand Banks designs the hulls to take this beating if necessary, but also offer the smoothest ride possible. With high freeboard, sharp bow entry and a general broadness to the forward hull, slicing seas is what the 54

does. Add in Grand Bank's warped semi-displacement hull (think of a racing sailboat that widens midship) designed to allow the seas to roll away from the hull, reducing drag while adding buoyancy, stability and additional lift, and you have one impressive platform. Dropping the transom deadrise to 8 degrees helps to attain the fast speeds.

Needless to say, Compton was able to command the twin Volvo D11 725-hp diesels to spin the GB54 around between waves (a quick yet agile maneuver with the next wave fast approaching) and get us back to the safety of the lee. If we needed to run the sloppy ocean this day, I'm fully confident the GB54 would deliver us in one piece.

THERE'S MORE!

I could end the story here, but there is more to say about this yacht, like the grand interior space and accommodations, panoramic views from the main deck and performance.

Complete with a soft satin finish, teak wood is carried throughout the GB54, including all bulkheads, cabinets and tables. Add in the textured fabrics, vinyl headliners and contrasting Silestone countertops for that homey feel. The combination of

the light teak, large windows and salon headroom of 6 feet, 8 inches complements the port and starboard L-settees. A great feature are the salon windows that electrically open. Yup, the large (28-inch-tall, 73-inch-wide) side and aft windows all open for a unique in/out experience. The centerline drop-down TV just aft of the helm seat is cleverly placed.

With twin Garmin 17-inch multifunction displays being the centerpieces of the lower helm, there's plenty of room for additional electronics, including speed/depth digital displays, Humphree Zero Speed Stabilizer system, Sidepower thruster joysticks, low-profile throttles and more. Convenient is the breaker panel, located next to the helm for easy access. The three-pane windshield with narrow mullions, flat helm space for charts, side deck door, double wide walk-around helm bench and stainless/teak vertical wheel make it evident that this yacht was designed with an owner/operator in mind.

SMART LAYOUT

Breaking the mold, Grand Banks offers the 54 with a galley-down layout, and it works. Designed like an open atrium, the lower galley is bright, airy and within easy

conversation reach of the captain and guests. Meal prep and cleanup is separate from the lounging spaces. It offers a much cleaner look to the main level and reduces spillage and stains on the flooring.

Meals for a casual party to a long-range cruise can be prepped thanks to the full array of appliances, including twin Isotherm fridge/freezer drawers, a Miele electric cooktop, a Miele microwave convection oven and a large stainless steel sink. Cleanup is easy with the Fisher & Paykel drawer dishwasher. Teak cabinets and drawers complement the Silestone countertops for easy maintenance and good looks.

With the galley-down layout (a galley-up layout is available that yields an additional stateroom below), the lower accommodations consist of two spacious staterooms.

Midship to starboard is the master with an athwartship island queen berth. Turning the berth 90 degrees offers ample walkaround space without compromising on function. An overhead skylight (located just ahead of the helm under the windshield) allows ambient light to flood the room. The private ensuite head has a spacious separate glass shower stall and Tecma Silence Plus toilet. Cabinet, drawer and locker storage seems to be everywhere.

Thanks to the hull's broadness, the forward guest stateroom in the peak affords an island queen berth, side cabinets and lockers. An ensuite head features a shower stall.

TOP DECK

With an extended deck that can easily handle extra lounge chairs, water toys and/or tender (thanks to the Steelhead ES1000 davit), the flybridge is well-utilized. Twin Stidd seats are at the centerline helm, as are two Garmin multifunction displays and plenty of room for electronics. Chill at the port L-settee with diagonal teak table. Across is a wetbar with fridge, sink and storage, and aft is a grill station.

Our sea trial running numbers (RPM, speed and fuel burn) came in at or slightly better than the posted numbers by Grand Banks, so use their figures confidently. The twin Volvo D11 725-hp engines give admirable range of 1,200 nm at 10 knots but have the speed to get you out of the slop when necessary. Cruise comfortably at 25 knots burning only 54 gph.

With a power package that delivers, comfortable accommodations, a hull that keeps you safe, and timeless good looks, the Grand Banks 54 is a yacht that you can be confident in. ★

GRAND BANKS 54

» SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 59'5"

Beam: 17'6"

Draft: 4'

Weight: 51,800 lbs.

Fuel Capacity: 898 gals.

Water Capacity: 264 gals.

Power: 2 x Volvo D11 725-hp diesel engines

MSRP: \$2,720,000

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» DEALER

Grand Banks Yachts

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✓ Remarkable seakeeping ability thanks to the warped hull design.

✓ Large aft deck hatch for storage area and engine room access.

✓ Opening salon windows were a pleasant surprise.

Would like a permanent aft deck table. ✗



Watch the video at
LAKELANDBOATING.COM!