

DOCKSIDE TEST

## Walker Bay 8 Revisited



BY JOHN BARR

I have fond childhood memories of an old wooden lapstrake skiff that was my constant companion during the wonderful summers at my family's lakeside cottage. I can still remember the joy I experienced sailing and rowing that skiff day in and day out while pretending to be a pirate and raiding the islands that dotted our lake.

But there's a down side in all this reminiscing and memories. Most notably was the spring ritual of spending countless hours scraping, sanding, and painting her after the long winter layup. All this hard work to get my piece of heaven ship shape for the fast approaching summer.

At first sight of the Walker Bay 8, those long forgotten memories came flooding back, with just a little apprehension. I was drawn to the Walker Bay 8 because it resembles the classic wooden skiff of my childhood. This resemblance is not by coincidence. The designer is an artist and a classic wooden sailboat enthusiast which obviously influenced his design. After a closer look and the realization that this boat is made of plastic, I was confident that the drudgery and upkeep of the wooden skiff was a thing of the past.

And the name Walker Bay is also familiar to me, having visited that

region of South Africa. Walker Bay and Jeffers Bay are on the Southwest Coast of South Africa north of Cape Town. The region closely resembles the Big Sur coastline of California and the area is a internationally well-known mecca for the surfing crowd. The principals of Walker Bay Boats hail from that region, thus the name.

### State of the Art

The Walker Bay 8 is manufactured of state-of-the-art impact-modified polypropylene resin. This resin is excellent for marine application because it is colored throughout so that the color cannot be scratched off the hull's surface as with gelcoat, and it is also protected from fading by UV stabilizers. This should be a delight for most sailors since it makes this tender virtually maintenance free.

The manufacturing process of the Walker Bay 8 is unique to the industry and utilizes a high-tech high pressure injection robotics molding process. This process features an incredible 70 ton mold (approximately the weight of a fully loaded 737 aircraft). The mold is machined 3-dimensionally using a state-of-the-art digitally controlled computer-aided milling machine. Remarkably, this mold took 16,000 hours and \$2 million dollars to produce. The hull is injection molded with computers controlling the metering of material into the mold at massive pressure, where forces exceeding 5,000 tons are applied. This occurs in a fully automated and controlled manufacturing environment that runs 24 hours a day. Each hull takes approx-

imately three minutes to be molded. As a result of this state-of-the-art process, the finished product exhibits a high level of finish and structural integrity.

### Sea Trial

We were introduced to the Walker Bay 8 back in October and we have been anxious to conduct a sea trial to see firsthand if it performs as well as it looks. Over the last few months we have had the opportunity to test the vessel in a varying conditions from calm waters of the harbor to 6" chop and swells. We found that she is stable, but a little tender at rest. The positioning of crew and cargo is very critical to her overall stability. As a rowing skiff, she rows straight and true due to her classic displacement hull and deep keel.

Since the Walker Bay 8 is rated for 2 hp, we powered her with our long term test Honda 2 hp four-stroke. The combination of this vessel and the Honda proved to be an ideal tender. And since we are all justifiably environmentally conscious these days, it is nice to know that the Walker Bay 8 can be manufactured of recycled plastic. With this and the fact that the Honda meets or exceeds EPA 2006 requirements for emissions, this tender/engine combination is extremely environmentally friendly.

### Test Putting

During our performance tests, powered by our new 2 hp four-stroke Honda, this little boat registered 4.8 mph at WOT (wide open throttle) and a super quiet 51 dB at

#### WALKER BAY 8

Length:	8'3"
Beam:	52"
Weight:	71 lb.
Capacity:	425 lbs
HP Rating:	2 hp.