

DRAWING BOARD



Outback 50

A trio of industry veterans designed and built the boat they'd want to own.

Ayacht broker, a boating enthusiast and a yacht designer walk into a bar... No joke, this is the way the Outback 50, debuting at the 2019 Ft. Lauderdale boat show, began. Andrew Cilla, owner of Luke Brown Yachts, has a permanently reserved table at Southport Raw Bar, a favorite respite for Ft. Lauderdale boaters, marked "Luke Brown Yachts Conference Room." While having lunch with friend Nick Vanoff, Cilla did a napkin sketch of a boat with a long aft deck to haul a flats boat. Vanoff envisioned it replete with jet skis and said, "Why don't we build it?" Drawings and discussions continued and Michael Peters was called in. Peters appreciated Cilla's concept of a utilitarian boat that adds versatility to cruising.

"We envisioned this boat for those like us, maybe former sailboat racers who wanted more comfort," said Peters. "Traditional boaters who want more of an outdoor experience—people who share our view and would say, 'That is what I want!'"

The boat was designed as an easily driven utility yacht. However, the extended deck, accommodating a small vessel and winch, was differentiating, as was the engine placement beneath the deck to enhance access and reduce vibration and noise in the salon and cabins. A keel protects the running gear and props, and with a 3-foot draft, the Outback 50 can take on shallow waters for varied excursions. A twin-engine configuration was researched

to be economical and efficient at 20 knots.

Vanoff opted out, deciding that building production boats was "above his pay grade," so the Outback sat idle. Until coincidentally, when John Olson of Newport Beach, California-based Offshore Yachts came to visit Cilla, now the East Coast dealer for his brand. Seeing the Outback model in a glass case he asked, "What is this? It's really cool!" Cilla replied, "Why don't you build it?"

So the Outback took shape at Kha Shing, Taiwan, where Offshore Yachts and other prestigious brands like Hargrave are built. Its cored, fiberglass hull above the waterline keeps it light, while the solid fiberglass bottom maintains stability. The interior veneer and upholstered panels are purposefully clean and simple as the boat was built for time spent both outdoors and indoors.

The buyer chooses the gelcoat color and layout options. For Hull No. 1, Cilla chose three small staterooms and two heads. Hull No. 2, sold to a former sailor in Newport Beach, went with a more minimalist two-stateroom, one-head configuration. A galley is forward, to port of the helm and a comfortable salon with a couch, table and chairs provides socializing and dining space. On the ample flybridge, a davit and RIB occupy the boat deck and between, a settee and table flank the two-seat center helm station.

Cilla will be first to sea trial the Outback on a six-month escape cruise in spring 2020 from Ocean Reef Club to Northeast Harbor, Maine. —*Marilyn DeMartini*