

Chaparral Signature 276



This nimble boat can go fast, but sits pretty dockside, too.

by Dave Mull

What Chaparral's Signature 276 lacks in length, it makes up in versatility. With its 8½-foot beam, you can trailer this boat anywhere—no permit required. If you're more of a stay-at-home-port-and-party type of boater, this vessel offers a surprising amount of cockpit area for enjoying marina ambiance. And exceptional performance lets you tow the kids on their wakeboards or take off for a tour of surrounding beaches.

I met up with Tighe Curran of Pier 33 in St. Joseph, Michigan to test the Signature 276. Gary Beck, a factory rep, came along for the ride. Gary is always helpful to have around to explain design nuances and benefits.

This model, at 28 feet, 10½ inches long (including the swim platform), is one of two trailerable boats in Chaparral's Signature cruiser line. Beck explained that the 276 replaces the 260 in the lineup, bringing 18 extra inches, a new integrated swim platform and an optional radar arch. The biggest difference, he said, is the dual-wide helm seat, which swivels and works as a four-person dinette with a removable table. Two more people can sit in the cockpit's main piece of furniture. Its back support flips to convert into a sunpad. There's a big storage area in the front, great for lifejackets and towels, plus a rear storage area. The cockpit also includes a sink with a removable cooler underneath.

Instead of a captain's chair for a passenger riding shotgun, Chaparral has a built-in loveseat where two can sit and chat with the pilot or with passengers to the rear of the cockpit. Access to the bow, which has plenty of room for sunbathing, is up steps molded into the cabin's sliding door.

The cabin itself is quite accommodating for a relatively narrow 27-footer. In addition to the V-berth, there's a mid-cabin berth. As might be expected, it's about the size of a train compartment bunk, so sleeping quarters there would be cozy. The V-berth converts into a seating area with a table that hides nicely under the front cushion when not in use. The galley has a microwave and an electric burner concealed

under a sliding top that also covers the sink and makes a nice cutting board or counter. The whole cabin has plenty of natural light through screened ports and a large, screened hatch. Although our boat had optional air conditioning, airflow seems ample.

Thanks to Chaparral's innovative construction method of three large molded pieces, the boat is easy to clean, and feels solid and rattle-free when you open it up on some mild chop.

The 276 has a wide range of power options, with the 300-hp Mercury 5.7L 350 Mag MPI Bravo Two at the low end, and the 425-hp Mercury 8.1L High Output at the high end. Our test boat was equipped with Mercury's 8.1L MX MPI with the Bravo Three outdrive, which cranks out 375 hp.

The Signature 276 jumped on plane with little bow rise, even with the tabs fully up, and accelerated to more than 45 mph, churning out 4800 rpm. That's fast for any cruiser this size with a full tank of fuel, water and three people aboard. A spritely cruising speed of 34 mph was achieved at 3700 rpm.

While I drove, I enjoyed the way it turned, and the elegance of the mahogany wheel. This is a fast boat, but not a scary-fast boat. With the tabs three clicks down, you could stay on plane at a touch over 18 mph while turning 2200 rpm to create a wake that any boarder would slaver over.

Whether you're on open water, on the road or just at dock, this versatile cruiser delivers. ↓

Specs

LOA	28'10½"
Beam	8'6"
Draft	2'8"
Weight	7,450 lbs.
Fuel capacity	87 gals.
Base power	Mercury 5.7L 350 Mag MPI Bravo 2 (300 hp)
Base price	\$86,431
Power as tested	Mercury 8.1L MX MPI Bravo 3 (375 hp)
Price as tested	\$94,676



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