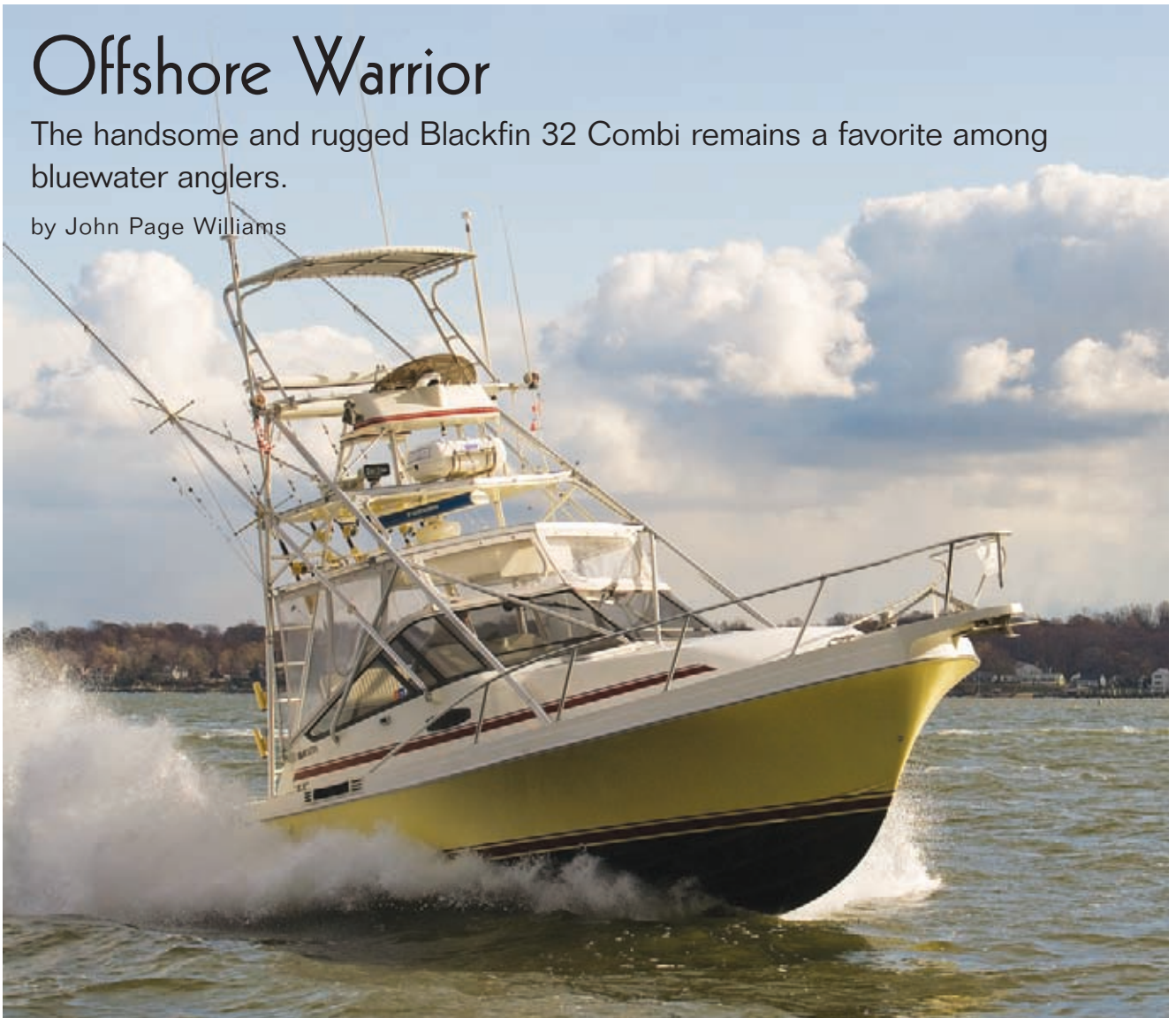


Offshore Warrior

The handsome and rugged Blackfin 32 Combi remains a favorite among bluewater anglers.

by John Page Williams



John Blidahl Photos

Launched in 1989, *Caneelin'* is a Blackfin 32 Combi that has built a consistent track record for catching mahi mahi, yellowfin tuna and wahoo, along with the occasional white marlin. For the past seven years she's been owned by Randy and Craig Bohlman, brothers who, along with their wives and children, fish her hard offshore each summer and fall.

The Bohlmans, who operate an electrical contracting business, cut their teeth fishing stripers from skiffs. About 15 years ago they got the blue-water bug and bought a 23-foot Sea Craft. They also learned pretty quickly that this little boat was on the edge of

being too small for consistent offshore fishing. So they talked to charter captains and came up with a short list of capable older boats in the 30- to 35-foot range.

Blackfin Yachts was high on their list. The boats have a devoted following because of their rugged construction, power in shrugging off nasty seas, proven fish-raising ability and good looks. When they found *Caneelin'* in Florida, they hired a surveyor, flew down, wrote a check and brought her home. Since then, they and their families have kept *Caneelin'* busy in summer, and she keeps them busy in winter, with projects to make a very good boat

even better. (Her first owner had a place at Caneel Bay in the U.S. Virgin Islands, hence the name; Randy and Craig liked that name enough to keep it.)

Design and Construction

The founder of Blackfin Yachts was well-known boatbuilder Carl Herndon, who worked at Bertram Yachts and greatly admired that company's classic 31, a boat that virtually defined the deep-V sportfisherman class from the 1960s through the '80s. After years with that model, Herndon saw ways to improve on the concept. His ideas became the genesis of Blackfin Yachts. Herndon turned to naval architect Charles J. Jan-

nance for a series of designs ranging from 29 to 38 feet.

Herndon closed Blackfin Yachts in 1997 and founded Jupiter Marine International in Palmetto, Florida, which he continues to run today. Blackfin boats are now built by Blackfin Marine International in Opa Locka, Florida, although the company does not offer a 32-footer.

Jannace's hull designs kept the constant 21- to 22-degree deadrise of the Bertrams but incorporated wider lifting strakes and chines. These give Blackfins better lift, a drier ride and more stability on the drift or when trolling. At the bow, the deadrise makes a quick transition from 22 degrees to a sharp entry. This provides plenty of hull volume to lift in big seas and gives the Blackfins greater flare and a drier ride than the Bertram 31. Hull layup is conventional but strong, with heavy fiberglass mat and woven roving, set in polyester resin with a solid-glass hull.

The boats have cored decks and twin engines. Many of the 29-footers came with gas engines, but the larger models got diesels. The result was strong, heavy boats with low centers of gravity and wave-cleaving hulls. Blackfins sit low in the water, with their sheerlines rising gracefully forward from self-bailing cockpits with relatively low freeboard. They tend to run slightly bow-high, which is a good attitude for a sea boat.

Blackfin made flybridge versions of its boats, but the favored layout for hard-core anglers quickly became the Combi, with its cuddy cabin, raised helm deck and large cockpit. *Caneelin'*, like many of her Combi sisters, is fitted with a full tower that begins with a full set of weather curtains under

Opposite page: Caneelin', a 1989 Blackfin 32 Combi, slices through the water on a choppy day.

Top right: There's a convertible dinette to port, opposite a small galley.

Right: The cockpit has ample room for a fighting chair and loads of fishing gear.



a hardtop, which supports the radar antenna. Above that is the sole for the upper helm, which is equipped with full controls and electronics, a leaning post for two people and a small Bimini top. After 19 years of offshore use, with 3,500 hours on her engines, *Caneelin*' is still solid, with no stress cracks anywhere.

On Deck

The helm deck includes a double-wide seat for the skipper, plus a large dash with plenty of space for controls, gauges and the neat electronics installation that one might expect from a family of electricians. To port is a lounge. Both seats mount on storage boxes, including a large tackle station to port.

On the centerline is a day hatch for access to the engine room, which is well-lit and neatly arranged for one person to reach all the dipsticks, sea-cocks and other equipment that require routine checks and maintenance. For major work, the Bohlman broth-



One glance at Caneelin's electronics-laden helm station shows that her owners are electrical contractors—and serious bluewater anglers.

ers installed an electric ram under the deck so that it lifts on forward-mounted hinges for access to the engine room. The boat came with oversized Racor fuel filters and two-inch raw-water intake strainers, so the engines get plenty of cooling water.

The cockpit easily accommodates a fighting chair, with plenty of walk-around space. The freeboard is low enough to make wiring fish easy, while the coaming is the perfect height for bracing one's knees and thighs. The sole is nicely crowned, with gutters around its perimeter and large four-inch scuppers. There are also two large fishboxes that lift out for cleaning and accessing the 1½-inch propeller shafts below. The transom door even has a sill to keep fish onboard after they've been boated.

Belowdecks

Caneelin's cabin serves as the Bohlman family's summer cottage, though they use it mostly for sleeping. There's a forward V-berth, a convertible dinette to port, a small galley to starboard and an enclosed head just aft of the galley. She accommodates five in sleeping bags, two on the V-berth, two on the dinette with the table lowered and one on the cockpit sole. The 12/110-volt refrigerator keeps refreshments cool during the day, while dock power keeps the air-conditioning running at night.

Power and Performance

A handful of Blackfin 32s at the beginning of the model run got twin big-block gas V-8s, but production quickly shifted to diesels. Many available today have Cat 3208 V-8s or 3116 inline V-6s, but *Caneelin*' has a pair of 300-horsepower, 8.2-liter Detroit Diesel V-8s, which continue to give good service.

We had three-foot waves for our sea trial last fall, giving *Caneelin*' a good chance to show off. Helped by her trim tabs, she rose onto plane easily and ran slightly bow high, so her sharp entry met the seas. She planed cleanly at 20 mph (2400 rpm) and topped out at 34 mph (3200 rpm), but her sweet spot was 25 to 26 mph (2750 rpm), at which point she burns about 23 gph. That performance curve shows off another Blackfin characteristic: a wide range of planing speeds to suit varying sea conditions.

Prices and Availability

An Internet search turned up a dozen assorted Blackfin 32s from the years 1988 through 1997, scattered from Massachusetts to Louisiana, with a couple in the Great Lakes. Prices ranged from \$70,000 to \$120,000. ▀

John Page Williams writes about boats and fishing from Annapolis, Maryland.

BLACKFIN 32 COMBI

Blackfin Marine International

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305-681-0261
www.blackfinboats.com

Blackfin Owners' Websites:

www.blackfinclub.com
www.blackfinowners.com

Designer: Charles J. Jannace

Details:

Production.....	1988–1997
LOA.....	31' 9"
Beam.....	12'
Draft.....	32"
Deadrise.....	21° (constant deep-V)
Weight.....	16,500 lbs. (dry)
Fuel.....	304 gals.
Water.....	50 gals.
Waste.....	20 gals.
Power.....	twin V-8 diesels of various makes
Price range.....	\$70,000–\$120,000