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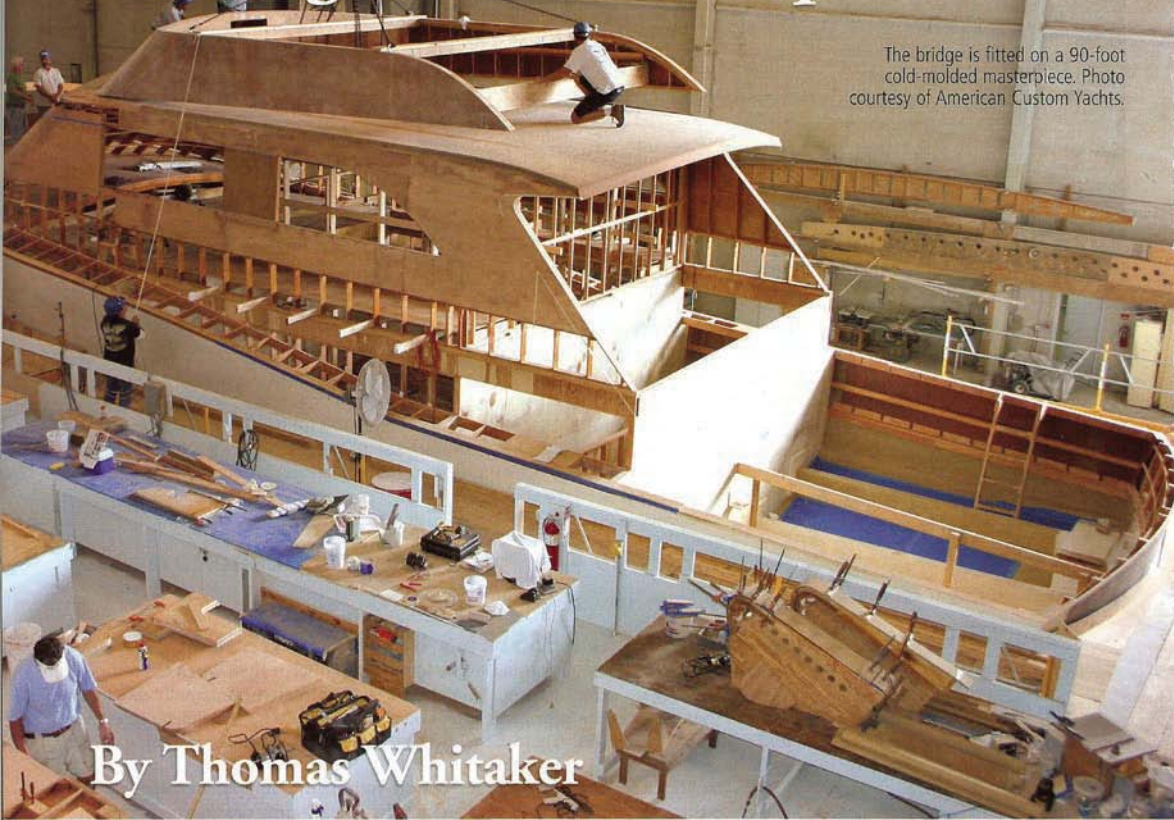




# BEYOND A DREAM

## *Building Your Custom Sport Fisher*

The bridge is fitted on a 90-foot cold-molded masterpiece. Photo courtesy of American Custom Yachts.



By Thomas Whitaker

**N**o backyard project here. After owning a couple factory-built rigs, we're talking the boat you've been dreaming of, put into three-dimensional form by a highly regarded builder. While your previous boats were designed for the rest of the world's boating needs, including yours, this one is all you.

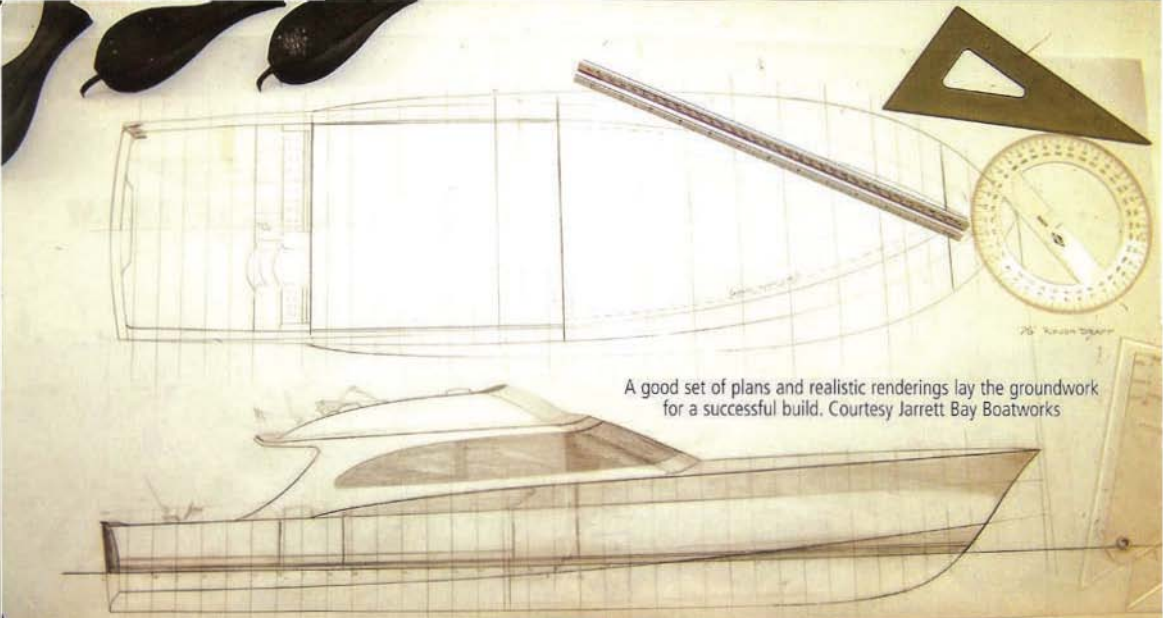
Your eye and cognitive boat design sensibilities have been drawn to certain styles, lines, construction quality, and functionality. You've done all kinds of research, talked to the captains, noticed who's standing on the podium with the giant check at the

tournament awards banquet, narrowed your search by visiting the standout yards, and taken a couple test rides. Now it's time to make your custom platform happen.

Depending on your mission, a marine architect may be the first person you turn to in your quest for a new boat. Designers work on a commission and charge a percentage of the boat's build cost. Some charge a straight hourly rate. Others blend both by charging hourly to create a preliminary design and spec, and then move to a commission basis for the final design phase, complete with construction drawings. Payments are worked out over differ-

ent segments of the design process. The fee also includes availability of the architect as needed during the build.

Many custom builders have their own marine architects and engineers on staff. Since they are not reinventing the wheel with original designs, costs are kept under control by utilizing pre-existing drawings as a starting point to capture a client's ideas. Builders often have a signature-style boat or molds that dictate the basic external shape. Layout changes can take place within those parameters. Danielle Roche of Jarrett Bay Boatworks points out, "We offer a semi-customizable yacht within the envelope of the basic structure.



A good set of plans and realistic renderings lay the groundwork for a successful build. Courtesy Jarrett Bay Boatworks

Certain bulkheads can be moved to create spaces that better suit our client's needs."

### Show Them the Money

Putting yourself in the production line is as simple as writing a check to reserve a spot. This often takes place well before an actual contract has been signed or the overall design has been finalized. Once you've got a contract, you'll want to nail down the landed cost of the boat to the locale where you want to take possession, which may or may not be included in the price or be part of the contract. It can take the better part of a year to three years to take delivery, depending on the boat builder's backlog and time it takes to complete projects.

Payment schedules vary. For example, Nordhavn requires 10 percent for a production spot, 10 percent to start the hull, 75 percent before ship, and final 5 percent at delivery. A down payment for the production spot is universal throughout the industry – and is non-refundable – so the future owner is very committed from that point forward. The boat builder doesn't care how you come up with the cash to buy a boat, just that the cash comes when the payment's due.

Banks treat a boat construction loan almost the same as a regular construction loan, and issue payment based on stage of completion. And the best way to ensure a happy relationship between you and your builder is to keep the cash coming!

For Wanchese, NC, builder Spencer Yachts, a monthly invoice with accumulated time and materials charged over the billing period is preferred. Willis Marine, Stuart, FL, charges

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an incremental draw at strategic intervals of completion based on a set price: flipping the hull, installing the engines, completing the flybridge and the salon, with some T & M (time and materials) thrown into the mix. After the usual 10 percent down, other builders require progressive payments of one third, one third, and the final third before taking delivery. D.R. Radon Boat Building, Goleta, California, starts with a contract price for a basic boat, and extras after that are billed T & M.

### Ready, Set, Go!

Laying the keel signals that the yard's work force is focused on your project. As this is happening, the boat owner is carefully reviewing drawings of the interior spaces and discussing options within the design. "We are able to provide a virtual walk-through with our three-D cad program. It's worked great in addressing our customers' layout questions," said Mark Willis of Willis Marine. Other builders, like Lyman



When it comes to envisioning your new sportfisher, there's nothing like a 3-D rendering: American Custom Yachts' new 90-footer, designed by Walter G. Hahn N.A.



Morse of Thomaston, ME, put together mock-ups of strategic spaces, like flybridges, salons, heads, and staterooms to varying degrees of elaboration – enough so the client has a good idea how spatial relationships and configurations will work. Another key area for mocking-up is laying out electronics and switches/panels for flybridge or helm areas.

This is also the time to deliver any large components you've purchased outside the boatyard's purchasing system so they will be handy for properly incorporating into the build. We're talking large transducers and gear requiring sea chest-style hull mods for hull-mounted sonar units, for starters. You'll want to have all equipment that's going into the engine room finalized and ordered by the time the hull's flipped or pulled from the mold.

By now you'll have a few files stuffed with lists and info: outfitting hardware, galley – head and HVAC components, engine/generator/drive line and engine room, electronics, fishing componentry and stainless steel, interior colors and fabrics, shopping lists for gear, general outfitting and safety, specs-plans and drawings, vendors, builder correspondence, and so on.

Flipping or pulling the hull is one of the most exiting times of the build. It is a birth of sorts, and really hammers home to the owner that what was once an assemblage of various materials has turned into a boat – their boat. This phase of the project is full of decisions, decisions, and more decisions. It's also when change orders and add-ons start happening.

It is very important to spell out changes as clearly as possible in writing. The immediacy of email lends itself to quick exchanges and is great for keeping the communication pipeline going. You will be asked to sign off on your changes. Some builders will have a formal way to submit change orders, and some, not so formal. It may be up to you to create a protocol that works between you and the builder. Thoroughly thinking through all parts of your boat well in advance of any part of their construction, and communicating your concerns will work wonders in maintaining a good relationship between you and the builder.

### Visiting Hours

Visits to your new baby are very important for assuring yourself that the picture you've held in your mind for so long is actually what's being built. Schedule visits during times when your presence won't get in the way of workers and production. It is very important to visit the project often enough that an alteration from plans will not cause the undoing of construction to accommodate your change order. No matter how big or small, that is a huge de-motivating, inertia-stifling, negative event for the crew.

Meeting with subcontractors or other key component providers – like the stainless steel fabricator or factory reps for engine, generator and the like – should also be conducted during your visits. Final decisions on every facet of the boat will come at a blistering pace the closer it gets to com-

pletion. Staying organized will definitely help keep you on the front side of this curve. Holding back on a key decision may create a domino effect on progress, costing the builder time and money, thus putting a strain on relations.

Flipping the hull signals the birth of a new boat.



Courtesy Jarrett Bay Boatworks

If you are far away from the yard or the build is offshore, many manufacturers provide a Website that owners can visit to view construction photos. Some yards offer live-cam

viewing, accessible any time of day. Sighting his unique situation, Richard Lebo of Maverick Yachts said, "Since we are building in Costa Rica, we update our stateside customers via the Internet, sending them pictures as their boat progresses. We can discuss questions as they arise over the phone or through emails. Once built, our boats stay in Costa Rica. Los Sueños Marina (about 120 miles NW of Golfito) is dotted with them, and we'll have one going to the new Capos Marina once it opens."

### Zero Hour

Depending on logistics and delivery location, a sea trial is taken by the owner and his party, which may include a third-party marine consultant or architect, captain, or trusted mechanic. Once (based on a punch list) the boat has been accepted, the last check is handed over to the builder.

Correctly propping the boat is a typical area that may require subsequent sea trials before final delivery. From Stuart, Florida, Mark Woodard, GM of American Custom Yacht, said, "We put our boats through a series of sea trials to ensure all ship's systems are working properly and to make sure we're getting maximum performance out of the boat. It may take a few sea trials to sort out the best possible match of props and boat to deliver the speed. Along with our super-precise cold-molded hulls and very high quality, it's what we've become known for."

With this, a fresh and final phase of outfitting begins, which can consume a couple calendar months or more, as the owner fine-tunes and imprints his new ride with joyful tinkering, preparing to fulfill seagoing and angling dreams at last!



## Jarrett Bay 77' Custom Sportfisherman

This Jarrett Bay sistership represents an extraordinary opportunity to pick up the reins of our in-progress 77' half way into her three-year build process. Tailor this dream into a sportfishing mega-machine that is uniquely yours. This modern vessel combines classic, solidly seaworthy Carolina styling with the latest design developments to give you a more efficient hull and the best performance in the sportfish marketplace.

LOA: 77'  
Beam: 21' 6"  
Draft: 5' 8"  
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MTU 16V-2000  
Fuel: 3,000 gal.  
Water: 250 gal.  
Displacement: 118,000 lbs.  
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Underwater Exhaust System  
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