



Starcraft 186 Expedition Sport

Boat Test #1306

A versatile fish-n-ski for the cottage or tournament.

Since 1904 the Starcraft boat company has turned a lot of families into boaters by making durable, versatile boats that do a lot of things really, really well. As the company celebrates its 110th anniversary in 2014, perhaps no model in its lineup better exemplifies this proud heritage than the 186 Expedition Sport.

Introduced in 2013, the 186 Expedition Sport can best be described as an 18 foot fishing boat that's also geared for family fun. It's the kind of boat that's right at home pulling the kids on a summer afternoon, or lining up at the start of a major fishing tournament. The key to this versatility lies in its three-station layout.

The big open bow is truly spacious, with more than enough room to accommodate a pair of anglers on its broad, carpeted surface. There's plenty of space for a trolling motor and electronics, while standard pull-up cleats not only provide a clean look, but prevent rod tips and fishing lines from becoming snarled en route to the hot spots. There's generous storage below decks, plus a 15 gallon (56L) livewell to hold the catch of the day. Once the fish are weighed in and the kids are ready to go tubing, just snap the comfy bow cushions back into place and the 186 Expedition Sport shows its Gemini nature by converting from all-out fishing machine to a comfy family bowrider.

Aft of the large walk-through windshield, the main cockpit features a durable vinyl

floor, with an optional snap-in carpet available. There are three pedestal mount seats and four bases in the main cockpit, plus additional bases in the front and rear decks. The seats – new for 2014 – feature excellent lumbar support and pinch-free hinges.

The passenger console features a large storage compartment, while the helm is thoughtfully appointed with chrome-accented gauges that are backlit and fog-free. The main instruments – speedometer, tach, fuel gauge, compass and volt meter – are all easily visible while underway, while an AM/FM stereo with MP3 input and hydraulic tilt steering add to the 186's creature comforts. An access panel in the main cockpit floor reveals a large in-floor rod storage locker, which provides secure storage beyond the lockable rod storage in the port gunnel. There's additional storage space for shorter items in the starboard gunnel as well.

The 186 Expedition Sport's versatility really becomes evident at the stern, where a flip-down rear bench allows the comfortable aft seating to quickly convert into a truly huge rear casting deck – probably among the largest available in an 18 foot boat. A second, 30 gallon (113L) livewell hides below its carpeted surface, along with access to the rear battery compartment.

Built on Starcraft's proprietary Gull Wing hull that provides exemplary stability and grip, the 186 Expedition Sport is an easy boat to drive – quick to plane, and with the kind

of predictable, gentle manners that make it a true joy to drive. Although rated to handle outboards of up to 150 horsepower, the boat performs really well with a 115 thanks, in part, to the Gull Wing hull's sparkling performance.

Because the boat has such a long list of standard features, there isn't a lot left for the option list. Along with the aforementioned snap-in carpeting, a Bimini top or full canvas package is worth the small upgrade cost. The ski tow package is also worth considering, especially for families with kids.

The versatile 186 Expedition Sport is exactly the kind of boat that has made Starcraft a household name in boating for 110 years. With its spacious layout, sure-footed handling and supreme adaptability, it's just the ticket for families who want more than just a fishing boat.

By Craig Ritchie

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA:	18' 1" / 5.5m
Beam:	91" / 2.3m
Weight:	1,400 lbs / 635 kg
Fuel capacity:	30 gal / 113.6L
Passenger capacity:	7
Power:	Yamaha F115 four stroke

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