10 Horse Fishing Motor Comparison!

By: Bob Korosa

[Editor's note: A the Leesville Meet a few years ago, a number of guys decided to do a "side-by-side" comparison of some of the most popular 9.9HP and 10HP fishing motors. When the day arrived, four motors were available for this test. The article below describes how these motors stacked up against each other!]

TEST BOAT:

12 Crestliner, Commander, duel cockpit, 1956, approximate weight, 165 pounds.



Test boat: 1956 Crestliner Commander 12', about 165 pounds

Motors tested;



Motors are stock, as they were sent from the factory. This includes the gaskets, props, and all other components. Anything that has been replaced was done so with items as close to original as possible. All motors are in good, running condition.

The test boat is quite heavy for a motor of that size to attain top speed but is representative of a typical fishing boat, with gear and an overweight angler. The motors were given two test runs, with one person aboard then two. The tilt was determined to be optimal for each motor by moving the pin in or out one notch.

Mike Seachrist provided the extra ballast for each test.

The test was similar to those conducted by Mercury Marine in their "Boathouse Reports" from the fifties and early sixties. They conducted similar tests, noted the boat, prop, load and speed. The results were always much lower than those 'reported' by the dealers and the owners. Boat speedometers are notoriously overrated.

Note:

The 1954 motor needed a separate, duel line, six gallon tank. It was nearly full, while the other three motors used a three gallon tank. This added about thirty pounds to the test boat. Keep that in mind.

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esults in order of running:

| | One passenger | Two passengers |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | |
| 1979 Johnson 9.9hp | 18.1 MPH | 14.8 MPH |
| 1965 Mercury 9.8hp | 20.3 MPH | 13.1 MPH |
| 1971 Johnson 9,5hp | 19.6 MPH | 11.5 MPH |
| 1954 Johnson 10hp | 17.7 MPH | 12.4 MPH |

There could have been a multitude of changes made to each motor, the mounting, props, heights and whatever that racers perform on their motors. This test wasn't designed to test alterations. It was done to see the performance of these motors as they came from the factory and also to see what a buyer could expect from his or her purchase.

A few notes on the technology of the motors:

The 1954 Johnson ten is basically the same motor as the last model made of that design, 1963. The ignition and carburetor are the same. The lower unit is relatively small and streamlined as far as OMC goes. It was by far the loudest of

the motors. The mounting of the motor to tower is metal spring rather than rubber. It does have an air box to cut down on intake noise but it obviously isn't as advanced as later models.

The 1965 Mercury was the second oldest motor tested and has no air box to cut noise. Mercury used sound deadening matt blankets in the hood to cut back on the racket. It seems to help considerably but still allows enough to escape making little boys happy.

The 1971 Johnson was the pride of the OMC line-up. It was touted to be quiet, vibration free and powerful, capable of pushing two anglers, gear and boat, quickly to distant fishing hot spots. It IS quiet, but still relatively loud at full throttle. It needed "trimmed" further out to prevent cavitation plate spray from returning into the boat. It also was 'out of the way', being 'low profile' and basically resting behind and below the transom.

The 1979 Johnson was the 'next step up' in the low profile design. This model has electronic ignition as well as 'thru hub' exhaust. It was quiet and smooth but didn't seem to idle any better than the other models. The first three years of that design still used points and condensers. I have run both versions and didn't really see any significant difference in performance. The earlier ignition system might have been a little more difficult to start when cold.

Thoughts and Impressions:

All four models make great fishing motors. The Mercury has been in the 'family' since 1971. When used in weedy waters, it slides through the greenery much better than the early version OMC motors. The later 9.9 OMC still isn't 'at home' in weedy waters. The Mercury can be easily tilted, sitting high on the transom, quickly grasped and tilted, allowing weeds to slide off. The 'low boy' OMC is difficult to tilt and grasp, being so low and behind the transom.

However, the OMC 9 1/2 does have several features that make it 'at home' in shallow water. It has a 'shallow water drive' bracket that tilts the motor at an angle that helps limit the depth of the motor in skinny water. It also has a convenient carrying handle and is compact and the most 'friendly' for transporting and packing.

The 1954 ten was actually second easiest to move about and mount. It has a good handle system, front and back and only weighs sixty pounds. It tilts quite well in shallow water and trolls down nicely. For its day, the motor was excellent for fishing and easy to control. The shift handle was in an accessible location, on the side, and the twist throttle responsive and user friendly.

The Johnson 9.9 motor is one of the finest small motors ever made for fishing. It starts easily, idles well and is very quiet at idle and trolling speeds. It IS heavy! It bulks out at over seventy pounds and not easily tossed on and off a transom. The twist throttle is fine but I still prefer the side shift rather than the front lever as found on the other three motors. This is just a personal preference.

The hardest to start was the 1954 ten Johnson. This was due to the effort to 'spin' the pull rope. Later motors improved on this with various engineering designs that used the oval rope sheath to coincide with the compression of the cylinders. It helped considerably. All four motors started with one pull after being run.

I realize there were other motors made, many models, a multitude of years and personal favorites. This test was done to compare four of the most popular fishing motors of all time. If you have other motors you would have wanted on the test, do it yourself. Grab a boat, tote some motors and go for it! I'm done! I'm still wore out from packing, unpacking, carrying and lifting these beasts! I realize so many people have other impressions and results from their own experiences. Great! I know 'grandpa' had a 'Evenrude' that ran thirty miles and hour, trolled for six days on a gallon of gas, and caught more muskie than Al Lindner. Wonderful. I'm just reporting on what I found with four motors in good mechanical condition with a gps, not an 'eye speedometer'. The boat is not the lightest, but then, very few fishermen ever went out in a sixty pound flat bottom boat with an ultra light rod and one lure. Fishermen carry tackle boxes that rival any woman's purse. They carry anything and everything for any emergency that MIGHT come about.

Note also these motors all had a full gear shift, forward, neutral and reverse. The electronic ignition of the 1979 motor didn't seem to make any difference in performance. The biggest change seemed to be the noise level. I didn't make any comparison on gas consumption, dependability or resale value. The scope of this test was simply to see how the various popular motors performed against each other. The results show that there really wasn't much difference and it boils down to personal preference. All make great fishing motors and each has a couple of features that make it friendly to a few. Some like the ease in tilting of one model or another. Someone might like the carry handle on the 'low boy' and the 9.9. The Mercury actually carries quite well if 'bear hugged' but needs more effort when placing it on the transom.

Thank you for your patience and thank you Mike Seachrist, Bob Joynt, Chip Rabbit and a couple of others that helped move, carry, tilt, shift, and slide all of those things in and out of the vehicle. I'm done! Too much work and my back hurts.

By the way, the 'second angler' or 'fully loaded' feature used by the 'Boathouse Reports' didn't have Mike Seachrist as ballast. He cut back at least 30% on the

performance of every motor. Mike, time to face the facts. Cut back on the calories!

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