

10 BEST SEAMANSHIP TIPS EVER

BOATING

WORLD'S LARGEST POWERBOAT MAGAZINE | May 2007



Stow and Go

THEY SAY The Odyssey 310 Air Floor stows when you're on the go and offers above-average handling on the water. **WE SAY** Putting an air floor in an inflatable makes sense when your boat needs to stow as easily as possible. The 310 is lighter than boats with solid floors and more compact—it rolls into a 4'-by-2'-by-1' bag. That same convenience, however, can make air floors resemble a tow toy underway. The problem? No true V to the hull. But Odyssey's high-pressure air floor inflates into a rigid modified-V, giving this boat more predictable handling. That's a nice plus, but be prepared: Expecting a softer ride, I first pulled the tiller at speed and almost went into the drink.

That same floor incorporates inflatable trim tabs, which allow the hull to plane faster, adding valuable buoyancy to the stern to compensate for today's heavier four-stroke outboards. Still, you need some weight or a companion forward to avoid popping a wheelie coming on plane. It's the little touches that edge this boat above the competition. Pop-up oarlocks are the perfect complement to the

boat's telescoping oars, which easily attach to the floor inside the boat. The easily removable plastic seat features a small stowage compartment and a ready cupholder; many seats in this class are simple plywood boards or inflatable cushions. Halkey Roberts valves, three-chambered PVC tubes, and three-layer, reinforced seams round out the package. The 310 Air Floor's collapsible wood transom features an aluminum support plate for the engine mounts. Four lifting eyes make it a cinch to haul aboard. With my single-passenger load, a Honda 9.9-hp outboard pushed the boat to over 16 mph, not bad if you're hurrying to shore for the night's provisions. **WHO'D WANT ONE** The customer who wants an inflatable with maximum portability and a little panache. **ANOTHER CHOICE** West Marine's HP4 Inflatable Floor Rollup Sportboat (made by Zodiac) offers a basic inflatable thwart seat and two-chambered tubes, rather than three. Price: \$1,999. **THE NUMBERS** \$1,650. Add \$3,000 for a 9.9-hp Honda BF four-stroke outboard. Contact Walker Bay at 888/449-2553, www.walkerbay.com. —JEFF HEMMEL

WE TEST

Walker Bay Odyssey Air Floor

TEST BOAT POWER: Single 9.9-hp Honda BF in-line-2 gasoline outboard with 13.5 cid, swinging a 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 8" four-bladed aluminum prop through a 2.33:1 reduction.