

Game Boy

With IPS power, the Rampage 34 Express makes driving a blast. BY CAPT. DAVE LEAR

MY FIRST RAMPAGE ENCOUNTER occurred more than a decade ago in Bimini when a friend invited me to fish aboard his 31 Convertible during the Bacardi Billfish Tournament. That experience confirmed the brand's solid reputation for rugged performance and practical fishability, and the latest expression of those trends comes in the form of the new 34 Express with Volvo IPS power.

At first glance, the IPS boat looks very similar to its inboard diesel predecessor. The biggest difference is the absence of side exhaust vents, because IPS engine exhaust dissipates underwater. The drive pods, powered by twin 370 hp D6 Volvo Penta IPS 500 diesel engines and connected via

TEST CONDITIONS



LOCATION: Lake Michigan, Sheboygan, Wisconsin
WIND: NW 10-15 knots
SEA STATE: Moderate Chop
TEST LOAD: 245 gallons of fuel, four adults, 60 gallons of water. Speed measured by handheld GPS. Fuel readings measured by engine instrumentation.

jackshafts, are tucked into longitudinal tunnels along the hull. Twin 435 hp IPS 600 diesels are an available upgrade. The most atypical aspect of the IPS system is the forward-facing dual propeller drives. This "tractor" configuration allows the engines to pull the boat rather than push it. And because the shaft angle is eliminated, the hull planes quickly and moves through the water more efficiently.

I tested the boat near the company's Wisconsin headquarters, and as we idled out the Sheboygan waterway into Lake Michigan, I quickly noticed how quiet this boat ran. Even underway, the four of us onboard could talk in a normal tone of voice. There was no exhaust smoke venting into the cockpit whatsoever.

Throttling up, the bow rose slightly before settling, giving a panoramic view from the raised helm deck. With its broad beam and beefy displacement, we carved up the modest chop like a holiday turkey. Shimmies and shudders that tip off a less-than-ideal running surface were nonexistent. The boat was stable at rest, even in beam-to seas.

Response to throttle adjustments was immediate, and the overall numbers show this boat will get you to the rip quickly and efficiently. With a 367-gallon tank and a burn of only 24 gallons per hour at a cruising speed of nearly 36 knots, that works out to a considerable operating range.

But the most impressive aspect of IPS power is boat handling. With constant electronic input, each drive can vector or steer independently with nearly instantaneous



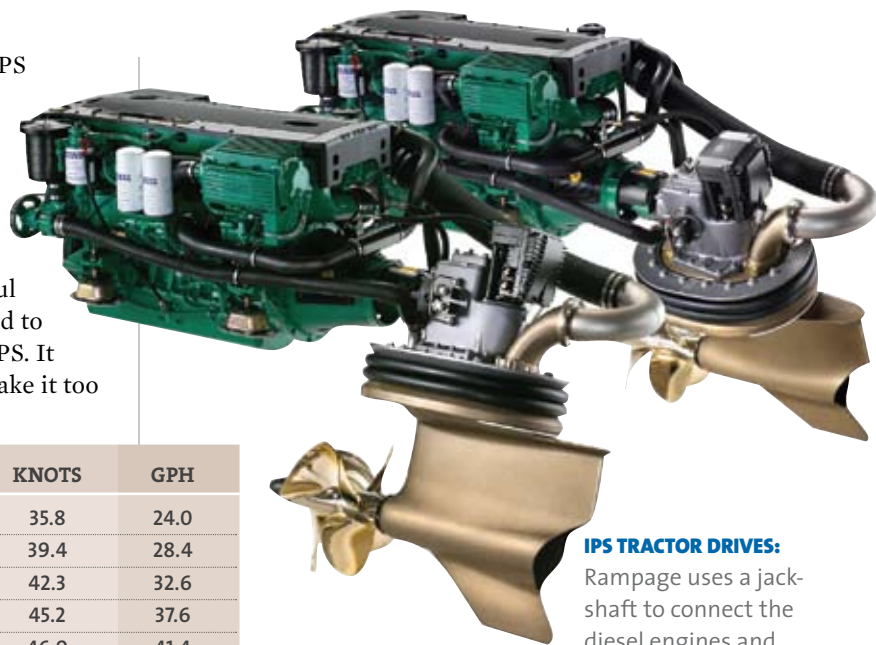
“The fish don’t stand a chance when faced with the responsiveness and overall performance of this IPS-driven machine.”

SPECIFICATIONS

RAMPAGE 34 EXPRESS
 LOA: 35'6" BEAM: 13' DRAFT: 2'5"
 DISPLACEMENT: 17,200 LBS. FUEL: 367 GALS.
 WATER: 60 GALS. PRICE: \$417,253
 W/ TWIN 370 HP VOLVO PENTA IPS 500 DIESEL ENGINES
 Rampage Yachts • 920.834.2211 • rampageyachts.com

response. Our test boat was equipped with the IPS joystick control and Sport Fish mode. Using the single-throttle synchronizer, I was able to use the joystick to back and spin the boat at will in Sport Fish mode. The pods will even vector outboard to propel the boat sideways or make tight concentric circles like with bow thrusters. The joystick function is also extremely useful in tight maneuvering situations at the dock. Need to parallel park to take on fuel? No problem with IPS. It will remove the fear factor for the novice and make it too easy for the old pro.

Rampage backs the 34's impressive performance with a host of fishing amenities. With 70 square feet of cockpit space, there's plenty of room for action. A 1/2-inch-thick aluminum backing plate is glassed into the sole to mount a fighting chair. A 5-foot-long insulated, macerated fish box, raw and freshwater washdown systems, transom door, gunwale rod holders and removable bolsters are standard. The optional hardtop package comes with a six-rod rocket launcher and spreader lights. A full or half tower with upper station controls and Lee outriggers is also available. Buyers customize



IPS TRACTOR DRIVES: Rampage uses a jackshaft to connect the diesel engines and the IPS drives.

PERFORMANCE	RPM	KNOTS	GPH
	2,900	35.8	24.0
	3,100	39.4	28.4
	3,300	42.3	32.6
	3,500	45.2	37.6
	3,575	46.9	41.4

W/ TWIN 370 HP VOLVO PENTA IPS DIESEL ENGINES

With the handling convenience of IPS, this 34-footer is ideal for an owner/operator. The forward dinette converts to bunk-style beds or twin bunks with a full berth below. The sofa doubles as a queen-size master. The galley has a two-burner cook top, microwave oven and refrigerator/freezer. A macerated marine toilet with handheld shower and vanity countertop adds to the comfort level. Cabin rod racks, a Clarion stereo system and cherry accents are all standard; an air conditioner/heater system and a choice of Kohler generators are optional add-ons. With 6 feet 6 inches of headroom illuminated by recessed lighting, the cabin is very bright and comfortable.

The starboard helm on the 34 offers excellent visibility and simple scanning of the 34-inch-by-13-inch electronics panel. The helm pod tilts out for wiring access. An Edson stainless-steel comfort wheel, hydraulic steering and trim tabs are standard. The helm deck has a hatch for quick checks on the engine room while underway, but the entire fiberglass deck rises on an electric ram for serious maintenance. An L-shaped lounge to port provides guest seating, and the side seat can also rotate to the forward position.

Rampage doesn't scrimp on construction either. The hull bottom is solid fiberglass with cored hull-sides. The fiberglass stringer system is foam-cored as well. The gelcoat finish is topped by a vinyl ester skin coat and comes with a five-year transferable warranty. Upper through-hull fittings are 316 stainless steel, while the underwater fittings are all bronze. The deck components are molded fiberglass with polyester resin and biaxial stitched reinforcement with cored construction.

If you're in the market for a serious express-style boat, the Rampage 34's responsive IPS power can handle any fishing scenario you might encounter in blue water. Hard-charging sailfish or marlin don't stand a chance. ~



the deck layout by choosing an aft-facing seat with a Frigid Rigid cooler, or a bait prep station with a livewell, sink and tackle storage. Raymarine electronics packages can also be added as factory options, along with a choice of cockpit ice makers.

Because the smaller IPS footprint takes up less space in the engine room, Rampage engineers are planning to add more lazarette storage compartments after hearing feedback from the dealers. You can never have too much storage, especially if the float plan involves trips to remote fishing grounds.