

# Stingray 194 LX



Spirited performance in a spacious 19-foot package

By Craig Ritchie

**M**ilk and cookies. Apple pie and ice cream. Wine and cheese. Some things just go so well together that, although created independently, it seems they were naturally made for one another. And while that may seem like an odd thing to consider while accelerating across a calm Ontario lake on a gorgeous summer's day, those were my very thoughts as I sea trialed a brand-new Stingray 194 LX run-about powered by Yamaha's all-new F115 four-stroke outboard.

The opportunity came in the form of a media day hosted by Yamaha. Earlier in the year, the company made waves when it hosted the world debut of its new F115 four-stroke outboard at the Toronto Boat Show, and this represented an opportunity to finally see what all the excitement around the new engine was about. Even better, it turned out that one of the test engines happened to be installed on Stingray's all-new 194 LX.

I've long been a fan of Stingray boats, and the new-for-2015 194 LX upholds the company's reputation for building sporty family boats in a major way. For starters, it's built on Stingray's Z-plane hull for enhanced driving performance. The so-called Z-planes incorporated into the lower hull surface act as horizontal planing faces when the boat is at idle, helping it to rocket onto plane quickly and smoothly once power is applied.

With the boat up and running, the Z-planes continue to contribute by controlling spray and ensuring that the boat's running surface passes through water that's free of any bubbles or vortices that could reduce performance. The smooth flow of water generated by this design is said to also allow the propeller a better bite, during both straight line speed and hard cornering maneuvers.

The use of computerized design in creating the Z-plane hull has taken the accuracy level of manufacturing to incredible levels for Stingray – from tolerances of about 1/16-inch to a near-microscopic 1/1000 of an inch. This level of accuracy allows the boat to be designed in 3D. The major benefit here for boaters is that scaled 3D human models can also be used, allowing the designers to form the inner hull around the driver and passengers, instead of having them adapt to someone's best guess. Upon walking through the 194 LX and taking it for a drive, the step up in comfort and performance was obvious.

The 194 LX follows a proven bow-rider layout that offers an almost full-width stern bench seat with a starboard-side transom pass-through gate, leading to the integrated swim platform. The driver and navigator enjoy swiveling bucket seats with flip-up bolsters, while a short step between the dual consoles takes one into the bow with its comfortable, wrap-around lounger. Generous storage lockers



The Stingray 194LX carried the beam far forward making a large forward seating area.



The helm is clean and well laid out – note the vent window.



The companion console features an ice bucket below and a radio compartment above.

## PBC STINGRAY 194 LX

can be found beneath each console, while between them, a large in-floor storage locker accommodates bulky items. Snap-in carpet is a nice touch.

The stylish helm presents all the major instruments up top in classic black-on-white analogue gauges with chrome trim bezels, including a volt meter, speedometer, trim gauge, fuel gauge, tach and clock. A digital depth finder sits centred on the dash, and the black-and-silver three-spoked tilt wheel offers a comfortable grip while underway. The sporty, wrap-around walk-through windshield offers clear and unobstructed viewing with the seat bolster up or down.

A Bimini top overhead was available to provide a break from the sun, while a large rear sunpad with cavernous storage beneath invites one to enjoy it, providing the perfect spot to dry off after a swim.

Centred on the transom was Yamaha's new F115 four-stroke outboard.

Redesigned from the prop up, the new F115 is not only more powerful and compact than the previous model, but according to Yamaha, it's the lightest outboard in the 115 horsepower four-stroke class. Scaling just 377 pounds, the new engine (officially called the F115B) is a full 24 pounds lighter than



The helm seat features a flip up bolster.



Yamaha's all new 115 outboard is a real performer.

The space under the sunpad, where a sterndrive engine would normally go, is simple cavernous.



the one it replaces. By incorporating weight-saving features like a composite lower pan and cowling, a single-ram power trim and tilt mechanism and a new lightweight mounting bracket, Yamaha's engineers not only put the new engine on a serious diet, they sent it to the gym as well. The all-new powerhead has been beefed up to a full 1.8 liters, while its double-overhead cam four-cylinder design now has larger intake and exhaust valves for easier breathing, more power and better midrange torque. They further added a new 60mm single throttle body with Yamaha's long-intake track system and a new free-flow exhaust manifold. Compression ratio is increased, and so is the full-throttle rpm range compared to the previous-generation 115, ranging from 5,300 to 6,300 rpm. The result of all this technical tweaking is more powerful acceleration that really pushes you back in your seat, and a zero-to-200-foot time that's almost a full second faster than what you could coax out of the old engine.

Perhaps best of all, Yamaha's new F115 uses simple mechanical controls and the same 26-inch mounting centers and bolt patterns as many two strokes, so it's a no-brainer for retrofitting to older boats when the time comes to repower. It's fully compatible with Yamaha's Command Link gauges and hardware, as well as the company's Y-COP theft deterrent system.

One thing that's consistent with its predecessor, however, is its whisper-quiet operation. Turn the key and you really do need to glance at the dash or look out back for the stream of water to know it's actually running. That silent idle does, however, develop into a pleasant, throaty rumble as you lean on the throttle. And with a new boat and engine in my hands, how could I resist doing just that?

Between the Yamaha's low-end grunt and the Stingray's Z-plane hull design, it doesn't take long behind the wheel to appreciate just what magical package the 194 LX and F115B make. It's quick, sporty and responsive – hit the gas and it pretty

much leaps out of the water, rising quickly onto plane in just over three seconds and effortlessly launching the speedometer on its way toward 40 mph. Alone in the boat with a half tank of fuel, it was easy to coax the boat to almost 50 mph at wide-open throttle, topping out on my phone's GPS at 48.2 mph.

But the real fun with this rig comes not on a straight-away, but when you throttle back a bit, and slalom through some S-curves and figure-eights. This is where Stingray's Z-plane hull really shines, gripping the water without getting stuck, and quickly yielding a sense of confidence in its predictable, stable handling. The ride is exhilarating rather than white-knuckle, thanks in no small part to the Yamaha's grunt and ability to push the 2,325 pound Stingray through repeated tight corners without breaking a sweat. Although rated to accept outboards up to 150 horsepower, the Stingray 194 LX runs so well with Yamaha's lightweight F115 it is hard to imagine you would gain much by moving up to the bigger engine, since performance gains would be offset by the added weight. To my mind, the 115 is just about perfect for this hull.

Fun? You bet! The Stingray 194 LX and Yamaha F115B deliver exactly the kind of spirited, sporty performance that should make this combo a real hit with families looking for huge fun and ever greater value. ⚓

### SPECIFICATIONS

Length:	19'6" / 5.94m
Beam:	94" / 2.38m
Dry weight:	2,325 lbs / 1,054 kg
Passenger capacity:	9
Fuel capacity:	129L / 34 gal
Water capacity:	23L / 6 gal
Maximum power:	150 hp

**Stingray Boats**  
625 Railroad Ave.  
Hartsville, SC 29551  
(843) 383-4507  
[www.stingrayboats.com](http://www.stingrayboats.com)