New Anchors Face Same Test Protocol and the Same Mud

This set of anchors was tested at a residential boat ramp on Terra Ceia Island in Palmetto, Fla. The bottom is soft mud, with some small shells mixed in.

Our test methods and protocols remained the same as in previous anchor tests. We used a 12-volt, DC-powered, 4,000-pound winch to apply pressure to the anchor rode. The winch was bolted to a wooden frame in the back of a pickup truck. Moving the truck up or down the boat ramp allowed us to change scope as needed.

About 15 feet of cable was pulled off the winch and attached to a Dillon dynamometer, which was connected via shackle and hook to the anchor rode. The rode consisted of 5/8-inch anchor rope spliced to 10 feet of 3/8-inch chain, a setup typically found on boats from 20 to 45 feet. Shackles were used as needed to connect the anchor to the chain.

Several loops were tied in the rode to provide quick connections to the test gear. This also allowed for variations in exact anchor sets and facilitated testing at both scopes (3:1 and 7:1). We calculated the amount of anchor rode to pay out by taking into account the water depth and the height of our winch above the water's surface. A crew member aboard the PBR test boat carefully placed the anchor and then retrieved it after each test was done. Anchors often came up with heavy mud clinging to the flukes, so the crew made sure each anchor was clean before the next test.

Once an anchor was properly placed, a tester onshore pulled the slack from the line and set the anchor by hand. After a set was assured, the rode was connected to the test apparatus and the winch engaged. Our goal here was not to apply maximum pressure, but rather to apply a reasonable load, in our case 500 pounds, and then see whether the anchor would maintain its hold in the soft mud once the pull on the rode stopped.

During each test, we rated each anchor for how well it set, made comments about its performance, and recorded its sustained holding power. Anchors that slammed right into the mud and immediately held line tension were rated Excellent for setting. If an anchor was a bit slower to set and took less than a 5-foot pull of line, we rated it Good. Anchors that took multiple attempts to set were rated Fair, and if they failed to set after three tries, we rated them Poor. When applying pressure with the winch, testers tried to hit 500 pounds in a single, steady pull. One anchor hit it right away with minimal dragging; another took a longer pull to dig in, and the third simply dragged across the bottom. We noted these results in the text section for each anchor.

Testers carefully watched the Dillon dynamometer to note the pull pressure at which each anchor dragged.

Once the winch brought the dyno up to 500 pounds or we reached the length limit of our pull, we'd stop the pull and closely watch the dyno's indicator needle to see whether an anchor let off pressure (dragged) slowly or quickly. We noted this in each text section. Holding power shown in the table and mentioned in the text was the maximum load the anchor held after allowing at least a minute for any slippage to stop or stabilize.

Final picks were made using all available information, including price, performance, weight, warranty, and easy of stowing.