



Starting with a Clean Slate

Before *Jelly's* hull was painted, we logged many man hours prepping her for it. Prep is the most important part of any coatings project and takes much longer than the actual painting.

- We started by washing the hull and wiping it down with acetone and lint-free cotton rags to remove any waxes or dirt that could be ground into the gelcoat by sanding. We used blue 3M painter's tape at the waterline and rub rail because it was handy, but a better choice is 3M's Scotch Silver No. 225 weather-resistant tape, which can be left on for several days.

- Testers used 100-grit sandpaper and pneumatic dual-action (DA) sanders to smooth the surface and ready the hull for gelcoat repair. **(Photo 1)** We opted for pneumatic DAs as they leave a smoother finish than electric orbital sanders, even when used with a heavy hand. We hand-sanded at the molded lip below the toerail and the rounded edges of the transom.

- To fill in gouges (like where the U-bolt had once been at the bow), worn gelcoat areas, and pin holes **(Photo 2)**, testers used fast-curing two-part fillers: the vinylester-based Ad-Tech Plastic Systems No. 17 SMCR (\$17/quart) and the more expensive two-part epoxy-based Interlux Interfill (\$130/gallon). (Not the difference in before and after shots of the bow in **Photo 3**.) Both products were easy to work with, cured quickly, and were easily faired with 150-grit and higher.

- We then rubbed the hull down with Dykem No. 80660 steel blue layout fluid (\$10/4 ounces), cut 50 percent with acetone. The dye—a welcome crutch to limit the amount of over-sanding that was done—makes it easy to spot which areas need further filling or more sanding. A few more rounds of filling, fairing, sanding, wiping, and taping ensued, and then the final pre-priming once-over with the pneumatic DA and 220-grit sandpaper. **(Photo 4)**

- Before rolling on the two-part epoxy primers, testers cleaned the hull with the maker-specified solvents: Interlux Fiberglass Solvent Wash 202 (starboard) and Epifanes D-601 Thinner (port). Testers then went over the hull with a Bond Corp. Crystal Tack Cloth (\$4/pack) to remove any remaining surface dust.

- Using high-density foam sausage rollers, testers applied two coats each of Interlux Epoxy Primekote (starboard) and Epifanes Epoxy Primer (port). **(Photo 5)** Between coats, we hand-sanded with 220 grit.

Note the difference already visible after one coat of Primekote (left) and zero coats of Epifanes (right) in **Photo 3**.

