

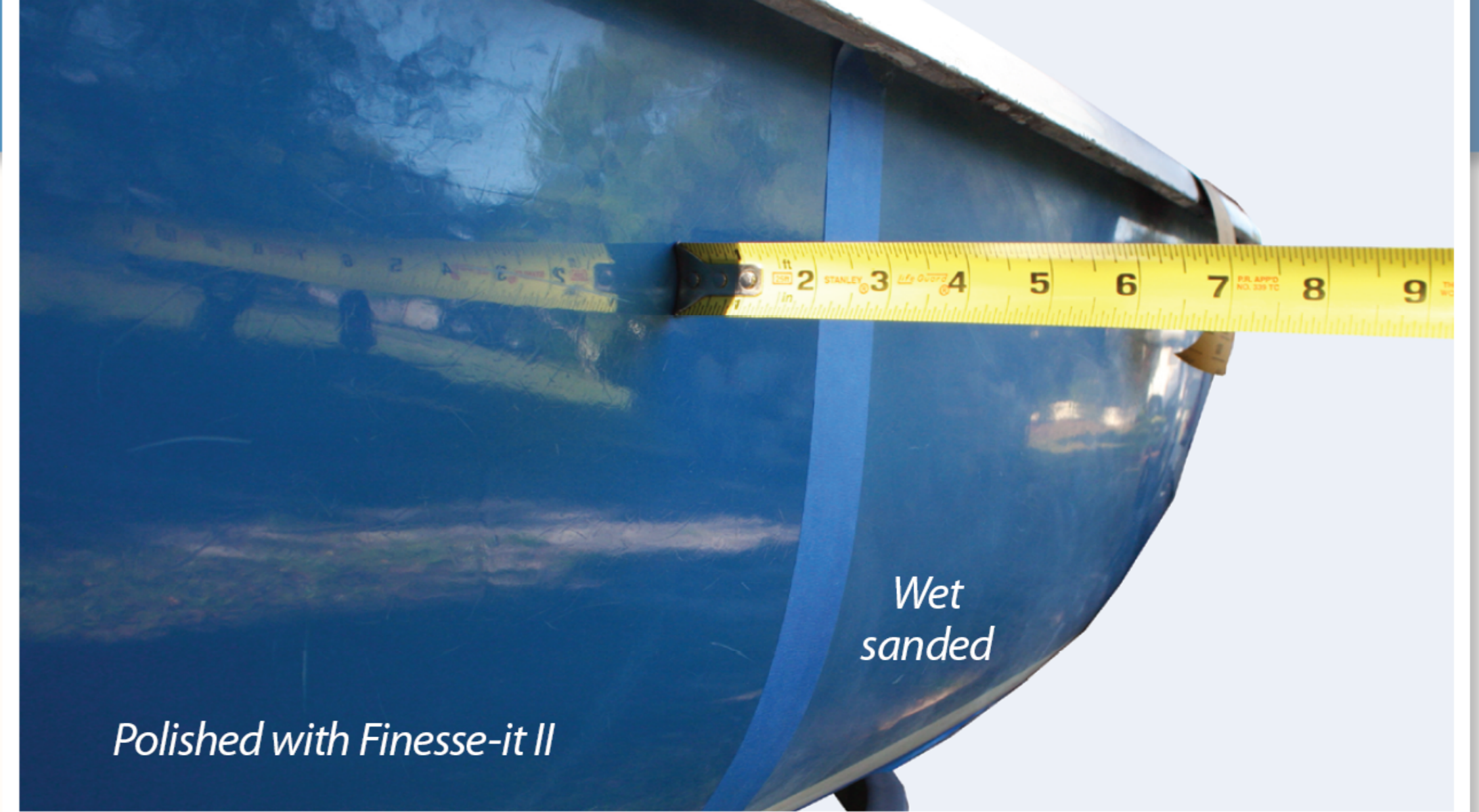
Shine On: Some Tips on Keeping that New-boat Look

The keys to gelcoat health are to: keep it clean, keep it waxed, and repair dings in a timely fashion. Here's a regimen we recommend to keep your topsides new-boat shiny.

- **Get it clean:** Wash the topsides with a powerful cleaner and then tackle any salt deposits with water and straight white vinegar. For rust stains or discoloration, try FSR, a gelled oxalic acid (but don't get it on varnished or painted surfaces) that has done very well in our past tests.

- **Repairs:** Repair any dings, gouges, scrapes, or scratches.
- **If there's still oxidation on the hull,** wet sand the surface (starting with 600 grit and working to 1000, 1200, or 1600 grit) and/or use a good rubbing compound such as 3M's Perfect-it series and a compounding-grade wool pad.

- **Micro-polishing:** The finest topsides finishing material we have used is 3M Finesse-it II. You can apply by hand, or by using a slow-speed electric or air-powered buffer. The polishing bonnet itself makes a big difference. The 3M Superbuff pad works well and comes in varying degrees of aggressiveness. Use separate pads for polishing and waxing, and be systematic in the application, marking off the work area with masking tape. Work from the top down, doing the area around the waterline last.



You can see the difference between an area polished with Finesse-it II and one that was only wet-sanded.

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- **Waxing:** Polishing provides the gloss, wax provides the protection. We use a hard paste wax—Collinite Fleetwax 885 is our favorite—working in exactly the same systematic method as used in polishing. Use a damp sponge applicator, and cotton rags for the final buffing when doing the job by hand. A boat that is in year-round service in the tropics should be cleaned and waxed at least twice a year. If you keep the topsides waxed, you may go several years without micro-polishing. Look for the results of our upcoming paste wax test and our Collinite vs. Meguiars long-term test in a future issue.

Check out Nick Nicholson's "Offshore Log: General Maintenance" on the *PS* website (under "Tools & Techniques") for more on maintaining your boat's shine.