



Yamaha Updates F4, F6

New engines address predecessors' shortfalls.

It seems the only people who dare label a 75-pound outboard engine “portable” are marketers and engine manufacturers (and perhaps, He-Man). In the world of small sailboats and dinghies—where outboards usually are not permanently mounted—engines with 8 horsepower or more are typically too heavy to take on and off the boat frequently. While *Practical Sailor* wouldn't exactly call 4- to 6-horsepower four-strokes light, they are manageable, and manufacturers have been working to make some newer models even lighter.

Yamaha recently updated two of its F-series portable outboards, the F4 and the F6. *Practical Sailor* had the opportunity to field-test them on a Zodiac Cadet 260 Air Lite inflatable boat, and testers noted several improvements over the previous 4-horsepower and 6-horsepower models.

We reviewed the original Yamaha F4 in the December 2003 issue and the F6 in the March 2003 issue. In those reviews, the F4 garnered an Excellent for portability due to its light, 49-pound weight, but the F6 was the heaviest engine in the 6-horsepower test field. Neither engine rated well for storage, and the F4 received mediocre scores for ease of starting.

The new F4 and F6 *PS* tested share similar design traits, the most notable of which is that they use the same 8.5-cubic-inch engine block and both weigh 60 pounds. That's an improvement in portability for the F6, formerly 83 pounds,

but it means an additional 11 pounds for the F4 and an increased displacement; the previous F4's displacement was 6.8 cubic inches. Yamaha achieved the F6's weight loss by switching from a two-cylinder powerhead design to a lighter, single-cylinder powerhead.

The F4 update addressed *PS*'s grievances of the original model. The new F4 was much easier to start than its predecessor—it fired up with one pull while the tester was seated in the Zodiac—and it's simpler to stow. It can be rested in three horizontal positions (on the face and port and starboard sides) without oil leakage. The previous F4 had to be stowed on its tiller side, which required reinforcement to make it stable. Another storage-friendly feature is the auxiliary primer pump, which primes the fuel system after a long period of non-use.

The F4 and F6 also share many functions and features, including 180-degree steering and an angled fuel-fill opening to help reduce the possibility of spills, according to Martin Peters, Yamaha communication and dealer education manager. Yamaha also lowered vibration levels. Engineers utilized a balanced crankshaft that counters the weight of the piston and connecting rod, yielding smoother operation, Peters said. The *PS* tester reported that vibration, while low for a one-cylinder engine, was still noticeable.

Testers found shift levers on the new models (on the forward section of the engine's starboard side) easy to reach,

The new Yamaha F4 (above left) and F6 (above) both sport beefy carrying handles on the back of the cowling. The shifters are on the front of the engines.

and the motor transitioned from neutral into forward and reverse smoothly.

With some small outboards, releasing the engine from its locked position for tilting is a frustrating process. But our tester raised and lowered the Yamahas on the inflatable's transom without cursing or fussing.

The older F4s came with large front carrying handles that testers reported made transporting the engine easy. The new models forgo these for an integral lip in the lower cowling that serves as a grip and allows the engine to rest on its face. It's an understandable tradeoff, and both the F4 and F6 now have large carrying handles at the aft end of the cowling.

The stop button with kill-switch lanyard attachment, choke, and fuel-line attachment are on the face of the engines. You remove the cowling via a single clamp on the engine's aft end.

The new F4 and F6 both have 1.1-liter integral fuel tanks that can be sight checked, and users can monitor oil level via an oil reservoir viewing window, a feature the previous models lacked.

Testers weren't impressed with the get-up-an-go ability of the older F4, but they found the updated model operated smoothly.

The top pick in the 2003 test's 4-horsepower group was the 55-pound Suzuki DF4 (www.suzuki.com), which was easy to start, showed a solid performance, and had smooth shifting. The average online price we found was \$1,025 for the DF4,

Photo (top left) courtesy of Yamaha Motors

PS VALUE GUIDE	UPDATED YAMAHA OUTBOARDS	
	YAMAHA F4	YAMAHA F6
MAKE/MODEL		
HORSEPOWER	4 hp	6 hp
WEIGHT	60 pounds	60 pounds
PRICE (ONLINE)	\$1,267	\$1,444
WARRANTY	3 years	3 years
SHAFT LENGTHS	15 in. (20 in. optional)	15 in. (20 in. optional)
DISPLACEMENT	8.5 cubic in.	8.5 cubic
TRIM POSITIONS	5	5
GEAR RATIO	13:27	13:27
FULL THROTTLE RPM RANGE	4000-5000	4500-5500
INTEGRAL FUEL CAPACITY	0.29 gallons	0.29 gallons
OIL CAPACITY	.16 gallons	.16 gallons
OIL CHANGE INTERVAL	100 hours	100 hours
CARB RATING	3 Star	3 Star
RATINGS		
PORTABILITY	Excellent	Excellent
STARTING	Excellent	Excellent
STORAGE	Excellent	Excellent
RAISING AND LOWERING	Excellent	Excellent

compared to the new F4's \$1,267. The updated F4 definitely gives the Suzuki a run for the money when it comes to features, stowage and starting, but the added bulk is a drawback.

In the 2003 6-horsepower outboard evaluation, testers liked the Yamaha F6 but really knocked it for the weight and stowage. Now that those issues have been resolved, the new F6 is a true contender in its power range.

Bottom line: The new F4 and F6 from Yamaha start easily, have better stowage capability, and shift smoothly—improving on their previous models and putting them on par with the top picks of the 2003 tests. ▲

CONTACT

YAMAHA
866/894-1626, www.yamaha-motor.com

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JULY 2010: Boat Review: Hinckley 49; Wire Corrosion Test; Online Captain's Schools; Women's Sailing Sandals; Prop Paints; Summer Reading List; Credit Is Due: New England Bowthruster, Profurl, Leatherman, Select Plastics; Bloxygen; PS Advisor: Resurrecting a Winlass

JUNE 2010: Bosun Chairs and Mast-climbers Test; Inflatable Boat Paints Test; Hydration Choices; VHF Handheld Update: Cobra HH475; Father and Son Boatbuilding Project; Mildew Preventers Test; Chandlery: SmartPlug, Waring Tailgater Blender, Bloxygen, Paintgard; Credit Is Due: Andersen, Attwood, Teleflex Marine, Shakespeare, Rule-ITT, West Marine; PS Advisor: Thermal-imaging vs Radar, OEM Oil Filters

MAY 2010: Multihulls Special Report: Corsair Dash, TelStar, Hobie Getaway, Windrider Rave; Cam Cleats Test; Two-part Teak Cleaners; Safety: Seascoop Sea Trial; Fluorescent Galley Lights Tests; Chandlery: Wichard Lyf' Safe; Credit Is Due: Harken, Raymarine, Edwards Marine, Dometic, Blue Sea; PS Advisor: Broken swivel shackle and onboard spider extermination

APRIL 2010: Distress Alerting: EPIRBs, PLBs, Spot; Bird Deterrents Test; Drink Holders Test; iPhone Navigation Apps: Navionics, iNavX, Memory-Map; Wi-Fi Antennas: Wirie, Bad Boy Bitstorm, Wave WiFi; Chandlery: Island Moorings Deluxe Mooring Buoy Pickup Stick, Weather Radar for mobile phones, Shurhold DA Polisher, K2R stain remover, Launch Alert, TruPlug; PS Advisor: Choosing the Right Fastener

MARCH 2010: Bottom Paint Update; Special Report: Chocks and Cleats; Inverter-chargers Test Part 2 (Chargers); Camera Mounts Test; Lite Cylinder Composite Propane Tank; Small Boat Refit: Cape Dory 25; Credit Is Due: Nantucket Baggy Co., Beth Leonard, Vintage Trailer, Essex Boatworks, Spade Anchors, Selden, Balmar; PS Advisor: Life Raft Fire Resistance and Life Raft Stowage

FEBRUARY 2010: Used Boat Review: Union 36; LED Tri-color Masthead Lights Test; Inverter-chargers Part 1 (Inverters); Degreasers Test; Performance Tools: Velocitek and Speedwatch; Chandlery: Bio-Solv Acetone Alternative, Columbia men's boat shoes, Camet Wahine women's sailing shorts; Credit Is Due: Praktek, Niemic Marine, Captain Currey, Seaworthy Goods, Energizer, Greatland Laser; PS Advisor: Thinning VC-17m with rubbing alcohol and anti-freeze and hull blistering

JANUARY 2010: Man-overboard Techniques; Liquid Waxes Test 6-Month Update; Solid Nav Traveller Electric Outboard; Practical Websites; GPS Receivers for Smart Phones; Multiplexers / NMEA 0183 Networks; Winter Reading List; Credit Is Due: Furuno, Lewmar, New England Bowthruster; PS Advisor: Riggin Failure

DECEMBER 2009: Boat Review: Hunter 45DS; Exterior Wood Finish 1-year Update; Drug-free Seasickness Remedies; Smart Phone Nav Apps; VHF Handhelds Update; 2009 Index; Chandlery: Leica Binos, 3M Tough Duct Tape, Foldtuck Cookware; Credit Is Due: Bebi Electronics, Ahnu Shoes, Hart Tank Tender, Imtra, Harken; Gear Graveyard: Ronstan block, Nicron shackle; RipRap; Cruisers Winter Workshop; PS Advisor: West Marine AIS as backup GPS

NOVEMBER 2009: Boat Test: Pearson Rhodes 41 / Pearson 41; Topside Paint Test 1-year checkup; V-bottom Inflatables: West Marine vs. Zodiac; Men's Foul-weather Gear Update: Bluestorm; Wind Instruments Test; Navigator Wood Stoves; Chandlery: Stocking Stuffer Ideas; Credit Is Due: Acadia Sails, CDI, Henri Lloyd, North Sails; PS Advisor: Replacing Lifelines, Removing Wood Stains

OCTOBER 2009: Bi-annual Bottom Paint Test; High-end Fixed-mount VHF's; Big Screen Chartplotters: Garmin 5212 vs Simrad NX45; Sea Boots Test; Boat Review: Wing Dinghy; Chandlery: Power8Workshop, Galvanalert; Credit Is Due: Euro Marine Trading, Globe Motors, OGM, Shurflo, Forespar; PS Advisor: Safe mounting for radar

SEPTEMBER 2009: Polarized Sunglasses Test; Expensive Handheld VHF's; Internal Tank Sensors; Diesel Contamination; Liquid waxes; Sailing books for women; Chandlery: Winchmate, Synergy dockline; PS Advisor: Synthetic oils for diesels; Where Credit Is Due: Suncor Stainless

AUGUST 2009: Morgan 30 boat review; Furlers with head swivels; Gripper knots (hitches); Mooring anchor types: Cabin fan update: Caframo Bora; Topside paint: Interlux Perfection vs Epifanes polyurethane; Chandlery: ActiveTrax Deluxe, Seattle Sport; Where Credit Is Due: Nauta, West Systems, ICP Solar, Sea Frost, Ferriello; PS Advisor: wet teak, bottom paint; Camp Bucket, Quick dry towels; Anchor rescue

JULY 2009: Gear of the Year, Speedster boats: Santa Cruz 37, Open 6.50, Andrews 28, Stealth 14.6, Starboard Futura; Furlers without swivels; Children's and adults harnesses and tethers; Acrylic coatings one-year follow-up; Chandlery: Dinghy Dry, WindPaddle9/1/09; Where Credit is due: Ullman sails, Dwyer, Navionics9/1/09, p. 6; PS Advisor: Aluminum pox, stuck zipper

AUGUST 2009: Pearson 32; Cordage Review: Halyards; Snatch Block Test; The Dark Side of Fiberglass; Plotter/Sounder Update: Garmin 498C; Navigation Software: Nobeltec Admiral 9.1; Exterior Wood Coatings: One-part Varnishes; Chandlery: Fast-drying Wick-er Warmup Towel and Waterproof Ego iPod Case

JUNE 2009: Refrigeration Conversion Kits; Handheld GPS Update; Raymarine A50D; Tillerpilots Field Test; Rope Clutches Update; Heavy-weather Sails for Furling; PS Advisor: Fouling fix for the waterline

MAY 2009: Exterior Wood Finish Six-month Checkup; Practically Green: Belowdecks; Ratchet Blocks Test; Wind Gen Field Test; Handsfree Onboard Communication; Ocean Tested: Tethers; Chandlery: Inflatable Hobie i12s; PS Advisor: Boat buying in a down market

APRIL 2009: Affordable Dream Boats; Entry-level Fixed and Handheld VHF's; Digital Thermostat for Galley Fridges; Nesting Cookware Test; Rust Busters; Chandlery: Flow-Rite Pro Fill, Big Kahuna shower, Fresh Flush Gas Watch, Fender Cleat, Chafe-Pro, Wrino Hook, Leatherman LEDs, Great Neck tools, Bionic Wrench; PS Advisor: Group Calls on DSC-capable VHF's

MARCH 2009: Maintenance Special: Bottom Paint 2009, Vinyl Window Restorers, Stripping Barrier Coats; Rope Clutch Test; 9.9 Outboard Shootout; Chandlery: Dry Suits; PS Advisor: Sail Shape

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