

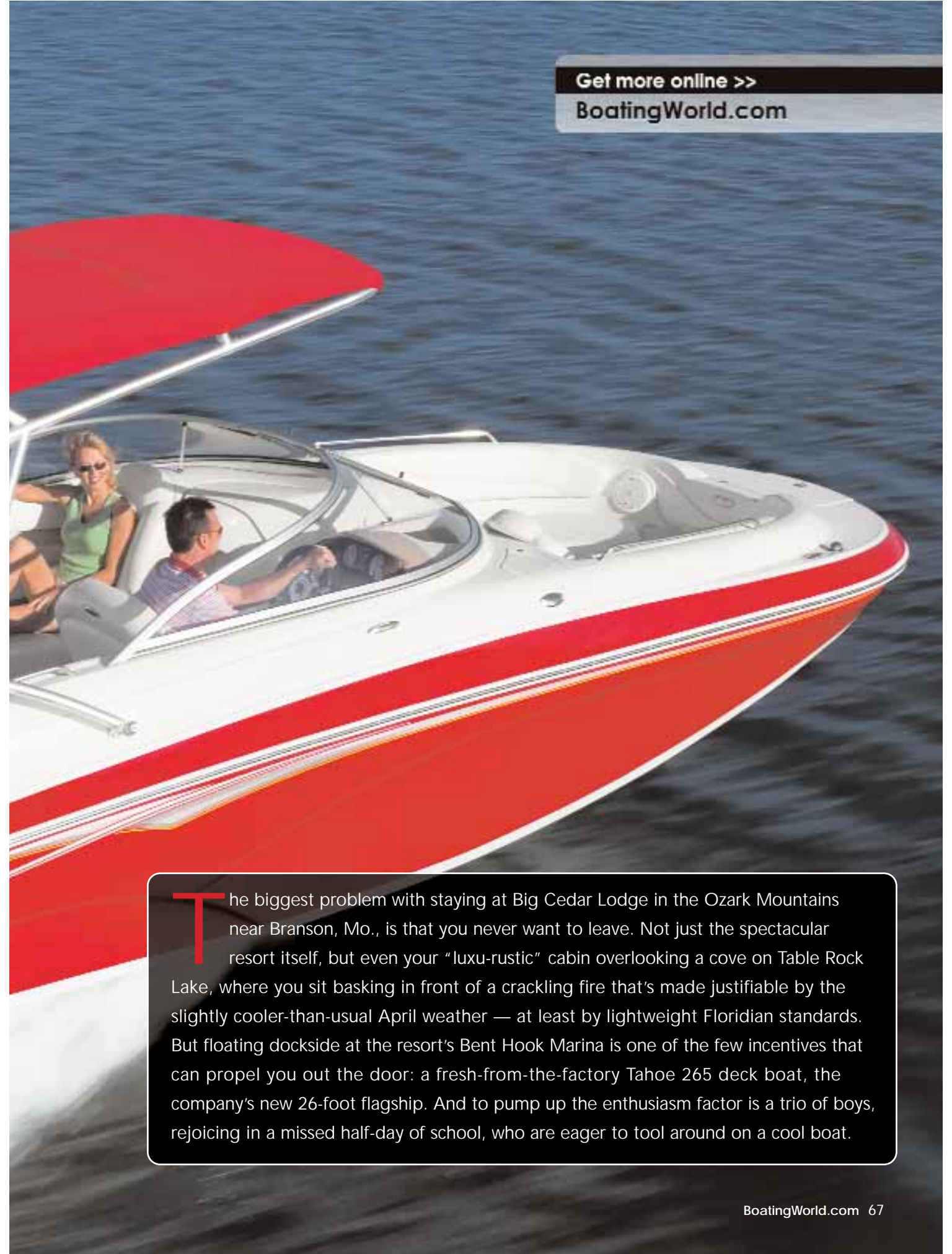
# RUNNING THE TABLE

Tahoe's newest and biggest deck boat, the 265, is easy on both the eyes and the wallet.

By Alan Jones



SEPTEMBER 2007 *BOATING WORLD* BOAT OF THE MONTH



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**T**he biggest problem with staying at Big Cedar Lodge in the Ozark Mountains near Branson, Mo., is that you never want to leave. Not just the spectacular resort itself, but even your “luxu-rustic” cabin overlooking a cove on Table Rock Lake, where you sit basking in front of a crackling fire that’s made justifiable by the slightly cooler-than-usual April weather — at least by lightweight Floridian standards. But floating dockside at the resort’s Bent Hook Marina is one of the few incentives that can propel you out the door: a fresh-from-the-factory Tahoe 265 deck boat, the company’s new 26-foot flagship. And to pump up the enthusiasm factor is a trio of boys, rejoicing in a missed half-day of school, who are eager to tool around on a cool boat.

## TAHOE 265



**LOA** 25'10" (w/swim platform)  
**Beam** 8'6"  
**Weight** 5,000 lbs.  
**Fuel** 63 gal.  
**Maximum HP** 320  
**Base Price** \$49,250  
(w/300-hp MerCruiser MAG MPI 350 Bravo I)  
**Price As Tested** \$59,125  
(w/320-hp, 6.2L MerCruiser MX MPI)  
**Hull Warranty** 5-year transferable  
**NMMA Certified?** Yes

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### Test Data

Performance data was gathered with a 320-hp, 6.2L MerCruiser MX MPI, two passengers on board and 40 gallons of fuel.

**Top Speed** 48.7 mph  
**Time To Plane** 5.2 seconds  
**0-30 mph** 9 seconds  
**Decibels @ Idle** 63 dB-A  
**Decibels @ 30 mph** 86 dB-A  
**Decibels @ WOT** 95 dB-A

### Notable Standard Features

Sirius-capable 4-speaker CD/stereo with MP3 input, Lowrance digital depth finder, refreshment center with freshwater spigot, stainless-steel rub rail, 11 cup holders, tilt rack-and-pinion steering, courtesy lights, head light, 12-volt outlet, hull colors, four pull-up stainless-steel cleats, drop-in storage boxes, in-floor ski/wakeboard storage, bow in-floor storage, removable table with two pedestal-base locations, color-matched acrylic bimini top, wraparound windshield, fire extinguisher, snap-in carpet, and hot-water transom shower.

### Notable Options

Wakeboard tower with racks, Sirius-satellite radio with six-month subscription, tandem trailer, spare kit, refrigerator, and shore power.



Fortunately, the sun rapidly preheats the temperature into the low 70s, and the bluebird sky contrasts with the Tahoe's striking black-onyx hull, one of the five colors (including the flashy millennium red seen on pages 56-57) available on this model at no extra charge. The other eye-grabber is the ultra-sporty wakeboard tower option (\$2,825) with a canvas that overhangs like the bill of a baseball cap.

The six-pack of boaters jumps on board via the loading dock-sized integrated swim platform, which features a portside walk through into the cockpit, thus preserving the generously padded upholstery that sports a classy-white with grey-accent-paneled motif from being trod upon by uncaring feet. Dallas Dodson and Connor House, ages 12 and 7, call dibs on the bowrider seats, which are ergonomically contoured and angled for optimum comfort. Parents will love the fact that the generous gunwale height keeps kids corralled safely on board. In fact, when a picture is taken of the adventure, Connor has to be propped up with a cushion so more than just the top of his head can be seen "prairie-dogging"

above the side of the boat. Low bow rails make perfect handholds to grab onto when the 265 goes into the obligatorily aggressive test turns. Up front, the Tahoe has huge storage compartments under the bow seats, which lift off completely for maximum access.

In the cockpit, Connor's 11-year-old brother, Cody, grabs the feet-up stern bench, which offers guests a variety of seating positions. And on the port side, Beverly Roush, a Tracker Marine brand marketing manager, is luxuriating in the rearward-facing stretch-out lounger, contemplating the wake with Zen-like concentration. Lance Ramsey, the staff's photographer, has temporarily taken the helm and hangs a





left, trims it up and hammers the throttle, bringing the 320-hp, 6.2L MerCruiser MX MPI sterndrive to life. He points the Tahoe toward nearby Arkansas at a top speed of 47 mph — even with a crew and a full tank of gas (with two on board, it reaches 48.7 mph). Actually, the 265 is at less than half-capacity on the run since the maximum load is 14 passengers or a whopping 2,500 pounds.

The adjustable extra-wide bucket seats feature flip-up bolsters for wind-in-your-face cruising or better visibility when docking. The curved windshield shows some dash reflection that's slightly more noticeable, thanks to the contrasting dark, padded flat surface on the dash, which is great for placing pocket-emptying items like cell phones and car keys prior to taking your turn at skiing. The tach and speedo sit high and bracket the mini Ritchie dash-mounted compass, which gives drivers a close approximation of direction. The modular black-and faux-wood panels create a dash with a clean, modern look, and the remaining gauges and system toggle switches are set up in a practical, vertical arrangement for easy use. A plus for boaters who frequent shallow water is the Lowrance depth finder, which is standard. The thick, sporty tilt wheel is comfortable but might reflect the sun

at times because of the large metal hub and spokes. A Jensen control pod for the jammin' four-speaker stereo sits to the far left and gives passengers the ability to alter the musical mix, although the captain still retains the right of the "hand-slap veto." The MP3 input with an alcove for device storage is a nice touch for those wanting more entertainment choices. The 265 offers a Sirius-satellite-radio upgrade for \$325, including six months of service.

Advancing the throttle puts the 265 on plane in around five seconds and settles into an econo-cruise speed of

30 mph in nine ticks of the chronometer. Spinning the wheel hard over carves a smooth, 180-degree turn that's predictable without the feeling of catching an edge and getting squirrely. Thanks to the beefy 5,000-pound hull, the deck boat's handling is stately but causes the speed to bleed off rather fast in hard turns. But later, when the wind whips up, you really appreciate the 265's hefty feel and the 21-degree, wave-slashing deadrise of the HydroStep Hull, which allows the Tahoe to glide smoothly over the nasty chop with tracking that's spot-on and predictable. The only handling quirk is its tendency to porpoise at certain moderate speeds with the trim up as you air out the hull. The solution is simple: Trim it down a little, or let it rip at higher speeds, like this boat's "happy speed" of 40 mph. Although Tahoe doesn't offer trim tabs, they can be installed by most dealers and would be an easy fix that





will keep the boat leveled out, regardless if everyone sits lefty or righty.

After spotting a small island that begs for exploration, the Bravo III outdrive is trimmed up, and the bow lightly bumps ashore on the pebbly shoreline. The water temperature is in the 60s, making the usual stern exit out of the question, but fortunately, the 265 features a bow ladder, which is neatly tucked under a hatch. Dallas deploys it and is quickly followed by the rest of the crew. After a brief inspection, a rock-skipping contest breaks out, resulting in a three-way tie. After reboarding, the youngsters head to the back porch and find plenty of lounging space to hang out. Although the Tahoe doesn't have a stern sun platform, per se, the padding over the engine makes a great place to sit and socialize with the swimming contingent. Should anyone be brave/foolish enough to go swimming or skiing in these cool waters, a standard hot water shower awaits on the swim platform. The stern ladder gives a clue as to why rattling isn't heard aboard the Tahoe, because it even has a hatch fastener to keep it secure. In the last few years, Tahoe has upgraded its line with high-end hardware like pull-up cleats and premium latches.

The next leg of the adventure is a run for Table Rock Dam, which formed a manmade lake when it was finished in

1959. Then it's on to Table Rock Lake State Park for lunch. Cruising past the large marina at the scenic park, there's a lovely, calm cove, which is a perfect spot for waterborne dining. Lance removes the cockpit table from its dedicated storage compartment in the cavernous driver-side console, which also houses an optional Norcold TEK II refrigerator/freezer (\$795) as well as the Jensen stereo. The portside console houses the large head compartment, featuring a light, sink with spigot and optional flushable Porta-Potti (\$1,095). The table can be installed in the bow, or with weather like today, in the

cockpit. After pulling out the food and drinks from the 36-quart Igloo Marine cooler hidden under the portside seating, the boys tear into some surprisingly awesome pulled-pork barbecue sandwiches obtained from a local convenience store. There are 11 cup holders scattered around the boat, so parking drinks isn't a problem. Post-pork, they clean the barbecue goo off their hands at the portside refreshment center, which has a sink and spigot. A built-in trash helps handle plates and napkins in preparation for the rough-water run back to Cabin Bluff.

Tahoe has made steady progress upgrading its lineup with boats such as the 265, which features no-wood construction, premium upholstery and plush carpeting. Tahoe keeps the price low with a base price less than \$50K and comes loaded with standard features and a 300-hp MerCruiser MAG MPI stern-drive with the Bravo I outdrive. With almost every option, the test model is marked at Tahoe's haggle-free price of \$59,125, giving you a sporty, good-looking boat you can take on big bodies of water like Table Rock Lake. But it's still trailerable, so you can take it on the road, and versatile enough to handle whatever watersport is on the menu, whether you want to go wakeboarding, slaloming or just cruise around and relax. 