


Smooth as 'Glass





Tracker's new 18 SC Fishing Team Edition makes the weekend angler feel like a pro

By Steve Quinlan

When Tracker introduced a Fishing Team Edition of its 21-foot Tundra, it took off so fast that the company decided to offer a similar package with the 18-foot version, only with a few less features to keep the price down. Essentially, the 18 SC Fishing Team Edition was designed to target a broader market.

Tracker designed the Tundra 18 SC to deliver a smooth, dry ride. After all, the tournament season begins when temperatures are still in the 40s, and if an angler gets wet in those conditions, he's going to be miserable for a long time. The 18 SC Fishing Team Edition was designed to give the weekend angler a high-performance feel and look. We'll expand on that in a minute.

Then there are the advantages to aluminum construction: its overall durability and how well it withstands shock. And, of course, less weight means less horsepower required to *push* it, and less power required to *pull* it.

THE ORIGINAL IS STILL AVAILABLE

Sadly, it's become all too common in the auto industry: The prices of best-selling models go up a little every year as all the bells and whistles that were once options — or not available at all the prior year — become standard equipment. And like 'em or not, you're paying for them.

Not so with Tracker's Tundra 18 SC. This popular wall-eye boat was first introduced five years ago using Tracker's exclusive formed-aluminum, V-pad construction process and is still available today. This year, a Fishing Team Edition is available for those of you who are ready to take it to the next level.

LET'S RIDE

Typically, my favorite part about a boat test is the on-the-water performance evaluation. Yet, in the case of Tracker tests, design, construction, fit and finish, and value all weigh pretty equally in what I have come to appreciate — and enjoy — about testing this company's boats.

On test day conditions were less than optimal for witnessing what the 18 SC is capable of. We experienced real-life, hot, sticky summer conditions on Missouri's Table Rock Lake. Maximum horsepower for this boat is 175, but the folks at Tracker had it rigged with a 150 OptiMax, which would have its work cut out for it with this 1550-pound walleye hull. With a full load of fuel, two men on board and about 50 pounds of test equipment, we put the 18 SC Fishing Team Edition through its paces.



■ The Tundra 18 SC Fishing Team Edition features an upgraded Minn Kota trolling motor (left) as well as Teleflex Sea Star hydraulic steering, a keyless ignition system, and upgraded Lowrance electronics.

Holeshot was pretty solid taking into account the propping, averaging 7.8 seconds for three attempts. The prop on our test rig was a 21-inch Laser II, which was quite a bit of prop for this rig considering we reached maximum rpm of just 4950 when recording our top-speed numbers and the 150 OptiMax's recommended wide-open throttle range is 5250 to 5750.

As we worked our way up to top speed, we recorded an optimum cruise speed of 29.2 mph at 3500 rpm. At that speed the Opti delivered a miserly 3.8 mpg and a range of 137 miles based on 90 percent of its 40-gallon fuel capacity, leaving 10 percent for reserve.

At wide-open throttle, the 18 SC topped out at 50.7 mph. At that speed, the ride is smooth as glass, and the driver is in complete control of the vessel. And the ride is as dry as it is smooth, even in hard turns.

The best part about running the 18 SC/OptiMax combo all out is that fuel economy hardly suffers at all. We recorded 3.6 mpg at wide-open throttle, which amounted to a gain of 21.5 mph and a loss of just 8 miles of range off of optimum cruising speed. And considering the Tundra is designed to keep you dry — even in rough conditions — you're probably not going to spend much time running it at 3500 rpm.



■ Beneath the front deck is a dual-level centerline rod locker with organizer tubes flanked by separate lockable storage compartments port and starboard.

FROM BOW TO STERN

Our test boat came with a Minn Kota Maxxum trolling motor with 80 pounds of thrust and a 62-inch shaft length as part of the Fishing Team Edition package. The bow panel includes a receptacle for the trolling motor and separate Up and Down trim switches. The seat features an adjustable, locking pedestal that swivels. There are two tackle storage lockers beneath the front deck each with aluminum lids, as is the case for all the storage compartments in the 18 SC.

Also on the front deck is a built-in live baitwell, as well as a pair of cupholders. The rod locker is located below the center of the deck, and to the starboard side of the rod locker is plenty of space for additional tackle, a spare trolling motor, etc. Two trolling motor batteries are housed beneath the front deck on the portside just forward of the passenger's/co-angler's seat.

That brings us to the helm. A high, rounded plexi windshield protects the driver. Just below it is a full array of gauges, which include fuel, tachometer, speedometer, water pressure and voltage. Below are a master power switch and the digital ignition switch system. To the right is a Lowrance LMS 480 fishfinder and beneath it is an AM/FM/CD stereo receiver with two speakers. Beneath the receiver is a switch panel for all the livewell and baitwell functions, which include fill, recirculation and pumpout, as well as the bilge pump, anchor/navigation lights, interior lights, a 12-volt power point and horn. And let's not forget the custom steering wheel that turns ever so smoothly and precisely via Teleflex Sea Star steering. A fire extinguisher is mounted beneath the console where it belongs.

All four cockpit pedestal seats (including the driver's) slide and rotate. Your fishing partner is treated to his/her own glovebox, which is built into the gunwale. Beside the rear passenger's seats are two longer glove boxes for stowing personal items. And there's room for life vests, a spare prop and other items in the cockpit deck locker.

Beneath the rear deck is a large, long livewell with two lids and no dividers for really big fish. On the starboard side, there's a tackle drawer

TRACKER TUNDRA 18 SC FISHING TEAM EDITION

Base Price	
(w/ Mercury 115; trailer):	\$28,115
Price As Tested	
(w/ Mercury 150 OptiMax):	\$32,835
Top Speed:	50.7 mph
0-to-30 mph:	7.8 seconds
Construction:	0.125" marine alloy
Console Type:	SC
Length:	18' 0"
Beam:	8' 0"
Hull Weight:	1550 lbs.
Rigged Weight:	1981 lbs.
Trailer Weight:	2836 lbs.
Fuel Capacity:	40 gals.
Livewell Capacity:	29 gals.
Maximum Horsepower:	175

Standard Equipment: 115 hp engine; matching trailer w/ GalvaShield protection and swingaway tongue; AM/FM/CD stereo; Lowrance X86 TX fishfinder; 29-gallon aerated, recirculated livewell; two aerated baitwells; Minn Kota 24-volt, 70-lb. thrust trolling motor
Optional Equipment as Tested: 150 Mercury OptiMax; Fishing Team Package (trolling motor, electronics, livewells and trailer upgrades, keyless ignition, three-bank battery charger)

Engine Tested:	Mercury 150 OptiMax
Type:	V-6 DFI two-stroke
Displacement:	2.5L (153 cid)
Weight (per mfg.):	431 lbs.
Recommended WOT RPM:	5250-5750
Gear Ratio:	1.87:1
Propeller:	Laser II 21" SS 3-blade
Jackplate:	N/A
Setback:	N/A

Weather Conditions:	
Air Temperature:	90F
Water Temperature:	77F
Wind:	5-10 mph
Water Conditions:	Calm

TEST RESULTS

Engine (rpm)	Speed (mph)	Fuel (gph)	MPG (mpg)	Range ¹ (miles)
1000	4.9	1.1	4.5	160
1500	6.7	1.9	3.5	127
2000	7.6	2.6	2.9	105
2500	8.1	3.4	2.4	86
3000	20.1	5.6	3.6	129
3500²	29.2	7.7	3.8	137
4000	37.0	9.9	3.7	135
4500	44.2	12.0	3.7	133
4950 (WOT)	50.7	14.1	3.6	129

¹ Based on 90% fuel capacity

² Optimum cruise speed

Tracker Boats

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■ The 18 SC features four swiveling, sliding and locking pedestal seats. The driver and helm seats employ a shock-absorbing suspension system to soften the ride in rough water.

that holds two small Plano trays, and on the portside there's a second live baitwell. A cranking-battery compartment is located at the transom (starboard) along with an oil-reservoir compartment (portside) and a livewell control lever.

WHAT MAKES THE FISHING TEAM EDITION?

The trolling motor has been upgraded from 70 to 80 pounds of thrust, which will make staying in one spot in windy conditions that much easier. And then there's the three-bank batter charger that makes maintaining your batteries just part of the routine when you park the boat in the garage or driveway.

The Fishing Team Edition boasts an oxygen-generation system that breaks water down to its elements so as to keep the livewell rich in oxygen. In other words, the hydrogen bubbles are released and the oxygen remains in the water. This boat has not one, but two of these catch/bait-friendly livewells.

The electronics package has been upgraded to a Lowrance LMS-480, which includes GPS, at the console. Serious electronics for serious



■ Aside from all the storage beneath the decks, there's plenty of additional storage for personal items along both gunwales.

fishermen. Keyless ignition is also part of the package; punch in your code and you're ready to roll. Both the driver's seat and helm seat feature a shock-absorbing suspension system to reduce vibration during long runs and minimize jarring on hard landings.

Other Fishing Team Edition upgrades include lighted livewell, lighted Contura switches, special Fishing Team Edition graphite paint and decals, Teleflex hydraulic steering and a sporty, custom steering wheel.

Will the special Fishing Team Edition make you a better angler? I guess that depends on the angler. The livewell system will keep bait friskier and your catch healthy all the way to weigh-in. And if you can take advantage of the upgraded electronics to find the fish, the more powerful trolling motor will help you to stay on 'em, even in snotty conditions.

PRIMO DOWN TO THE TRAILER

Tracker's state-of-the-art construction, which we'll get to in just a second, doesn't end with its boats. Its trailers all feature GalvaShield protection. The aluminum is heated to 900 degrees Fahrenheit and then rolled to form the tubing. Next, zinc coating is applied both inside and outside the tubing, then a conversion coat is added to make the tubing smooth. A clear, organic topcoat goes on next, and a powder coating seals the deal. And everywhere it's drilled, cut or welded, the trailer is treated again, then powder-coated.

The 18 SC's trailer is built specifically for the 18 SC. In fact, every Tracker trailer is built and painted specifically for the boat it'll be trailering. A spare tire is one of the many extras Tracker throws in as part of the Fishing Team Edition. Another item worth mentioning here is the use of EZ Lube hubs. Grease travels

from the outside to the inside of the axle and then returns to the bearings. A swingaway tongue allows you to safely stow your rig in a standard 20-foot garage.

CONSTRUCTION SECOND TO NONE

If you've never seen a Tundra or Avalanche up close, you should. You'll swear Tracker started building fiberglass bass, walleye and multispecies boats, and somehow you just didn't hear about it. Not only are these hulls smooth as 'glass, but when you plunk one with your knuckle — just to make sure it really *is* aluminum — you'll be left scratching your head because it sounds like 'glass, too.

So what else makes this Tundra's hull so special, and how, exactly, does it deliver such a dry ride? For starters, none of its parts are required to be flat or rectangular, which, according to Tracker engineers, is the key to its anti-backwash transom. That and the fact that it's a 25-inch transom with 20 degrees of deadrise.

While bass anglers can prevent backwash by slowly cutting power when it's time to come off plane and drop the trolling motor, it's not that simple for walleye guys who backtroll in rough water. They need a transom designed specifically for backtrolling.

And to keep anglers dry when they're going



■ The 18 SC features two aerated baitwells, one on the front deck and one on the rear deck.

forward, a 35-degree vee at the bow flares outward and channels the water back down to eliminate spray.

The 18 SC isn't the first Tracker we've tested, but it's just like all the rest in one sense: fit and finish. No erratic gaps. No fasteners of different lengths — or heads for that matter — on the same latch, hinge or piece of molding. No hanging carpet. The plumbing in the bilge area is neatly thought out and executed. Everything has its place, and there's a place for everything. The 18 SC we tested is a testimony to good, old U.S. of A. pride in workmanship; its craftsmanship lives up to its superior design. **BWB**