

For seven years, go-fast enthusiasts have been waiting for the promised “fisherman’s Allison” — the long-rumored, larger and beamier bass model we’ve been teased with since the mid-1990s. Wait no longer. If you’re looking for a rig that combines sheer speed with excellent fishing amenities and ultra-cool tricks — get out your checkbook, your ship has come in.

The new BasSport XB-21 is a departure from typical Allisons in that it’s a big, beamy, deep hull. Its 21-foot, 2-inch-long by 7-foot, 9-inch-wide running surface is almost too complex to describe. It features a variable-deadrise, V-pad design and quick-planing innovations that allow strong performance with a smaller-than-expected outboard. The boat is available in Tournament or Elite editions with either single or dual consoles.

This is no lightweight race hull; bare hull weight is listed at 1450 pounds, and we measured

a towed weight of 3335 pounds, which included a tandem trailer. Even so, our test hull shot to 30 mph in 6.5 seconds with two aboard, a half tank of fuel and a standard load of fishing and safety gear. Rigged with a Mercury Racing OptiMax 200XS swinging a 26-inch Trophy propeller through stock 1.87:1 gears at 6750 rpm, the big hull hit 82.1 mph on Stalker radar. She accelerated from 40 to 60 mph in 6.5 seconds.

While his hulls are best known for race-winning top speed and acceleration, owner and hull designer Darris Allison touts his boats’ miserly way with a gallon of fuel. The OptiMax and BasSport XB-21 combination is no exception, and offers 7.4 mpg economy at a 36.4 mph cruise. Even at 75 mph, this rig is more efficient than most hulls running at half throttle, achieving better than 5 mpg.

■ One of many unique features aboard Allison’s new BasSport XB-21 is removable, second-row seating. Rigged with Mercury Racing’s OptiMax 200XS, we clocked her at 82.1 mph.

#### SPEED, AND HANDLING, TOO

While 82 mph is nothing to sneeze at, this 21-footer handles that speed easily. Our test hull featured a CMC hydraulic-setback jack, and only with careful fine-tuning at speed did we achieve our top end. Simply setting the engine at a conservative height would still net speeds in the 80 mph range — but more horsepower would easily bring the upper 80s (and higher) that Allison drivers typically demand.

For warranty purposes, the boat initially was rated for outboards of 440 pounds or 2.6L in size or less. Just prior to presstime, however, that rating was revised to outboards of 200 hp and 500 pounds maximum. Allison also told us that an outboard weighing “slightly over” the 500-pound mark wouldn’t void the warranty, which, for example, would seem to imply that the 524-pound Evinrude 200 would be OK. Where the company will draw the line is a bit of a gray area, however, so prospective owners are advised to check before deciding on an “overweight” outboard.

Of course, it’s fair to assume that some buyers would like the chance to hang an even more powerful engine off the transom. Allison dealers who’ve tested this hull with Mercury Racing’s 225X report speeds of 85 to 88 mph. In this reviewer’s opinion, the BasSport XB-21

would easily handle the weight and power of 225 and 250 hp outboards — and would excel at the higher speeds these engines would provide.

Sweeping turns at 75 mph came smoothly and without error. We were able to crank the wheel in an ever-increasing arc while trimming the Merc down to effect a gradually tighter turn — without a hint of skipping, catching a chine or hooking. At 35 to 55 mph, turns are effortless and clean. The only drawback is the standard, dual-opposed-cable Ride Guide steering. Allison insists on this setup for all production boats. In Allison’s opinion, it’s the only commercially available system that provides enough feedback and response for the driver to react quickly to changing conditions. He’s also sold on the safety of a multi-bolt attachment point (using T & R Marine’s dual-steering connector kit) and backup cable should a cable, bolt or bracket fail.

For these reasons, Allison does not offer the high-performance hydraulic systems that have become standard issue on other performance bass boats. The downside to dual-opposed cable systems, of course, is the tremendous torque transmitted to the steering wheel. Putting it another way, you won’t have to spend time at the gym after driving this rig.

Although we had calm conditions during our test session, we roiled up the surface of Tennessee’s Fort Loudon Lake to simulate big water. That, coupled with the wash from a wakeboard boat and

Seven years in development, the new BasSport XB-21 is Allison’s version of a full-blown fishing rig

# Angler’s Allison

Exclusive First Test

By John Tiger, Jr.

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■ Fore and aft decks offering more than 56 square feet of fishing room are just the start of this boat's angling amenities. (Far left) Our test boat's helm features wheel-mounted trim switches, SmartCraft gauges and a flush-mount Garmin sounder. The custom gearshift works well and looks great. (Left) The trash compartment/emergency head hinges up to reveal a 5-gallon pail. The entire assembly tilts forward for access to livewell pumps.

passing cruisers, allowed us to approximate how the new hull handles the rough stuff. Its steep 22½ degrees of transom deadrise tamed everything we threw at it, and seemingly begged for more.

The long keel and deep-V provide a smooth, controlled ride — even at 75 mph, when there's very little wetted surface. At sub-30 mph speeds, there's absolutely no bounce or porpoise-

■ Famed hull designer Darris Allison pushes his latest model to the limit during our exclusive first test.



ing, and when a full power-off is performed, the buoyancy of the boat's exaggerated rear sponsons is evident. We couldn't soak the aft deck no matter how hard we tried.

#### HIGH-TECH BUILD

Allison has been at the forefront of high-performance construction since the 1980s, and the XB-21 reflects all the latest tricks. Starting with premium NPC gelcoat (Allison policy: solid colors or two-tone only), the layup switches to AME 4000 and 5000 resin and a combination of Kevlar and bi-axial fiberglass. The stringers are fiberglass, so there's very little wood — just a few small squares here and there as backup stiffeners. High-density PVC foam coring stiffens the decks and hull, as well as the



■ The BasSport XB-21's running surface has more twists and turns than a roller coaster.

transom — which also features a welded aluminum grid that the engine and jackplate bolt to. This creates a rot-free, ultra-strong mounting surface, complete with six stainless steel studs to secure the standard 8x9½-inch set-back manual jackplate.

Like the company's other models, the BasSport XB-21's hull is too complex to simply say it's a variable-deadrise, deep-V with a running pad. Allison spent seven years dialing in the design, and it has a myriad of tricks and twists to make it plane, turn and blister through the rough stuff with ease. Much time was spent working on holeshot, so the hull has many features not seen on previous Allison's. The exaggerated aft sponsons provide buoyancy at rest, and also serve as planing aids. The underside of these sponsons is highly detailed, with steps, reverse angle strakes and boxed-in lifting rails that channel water to produce quick planing and clean low-speed running.

Noticeable under the transom is a patented aluminum planing device. Dubbed the "Skid Planer," it directs water through and over itself while aiding low-speed planing. According to Allison, this device saves seconds from holeshot times, and is an adaptation of the many planing aids and "skid plates" affixed underneath top outboard drag boats. It works; 6.5 seconds from 0-to-30 mph is excellent for a 21-footer with only 200 horses pushing it.

#### COOL TOYS

While it may be difficult for the average boater to comprehend the long hours spent perfecting the hull design, it's easy to see the fruits of Allison's fertile mind in the layout. This boat features so many cool touches it's hard to describe them all.

Starting forward, the bow is designed to create a "nest" for the trolling motor. This allows a straight mounting position, as Allison hates to mount anything off-kilter. Recessed into the forward hull are two high-intensity headlights,

### Allison BasSport XB-21

Base Price (w/o engine):	\$31,900
Price As Tested (Elite model):	\$51,785
Top Speed:	82.1 mph
0-to-30 mph:	6.5 seconds
Construction:	Fiberglass and Kevlar
Console Type:	Dual
Length:	21' 2"
Beam:	7' 9"
Hull Weight (advertised):	1,450 lbs.
Rigged Weight:	2,205 lbs.
Trailer Weight:	3,335 lbs.
Fuel Capacity:	30 gals.
Livewell Capacity:	38 gals.
Maximum Horsepower:	200

#### Standard Equipment (Tournament model):

Sport wheel with two rocker trim switches, Hot Foot throttle, adjustable seats, docking lights, Skid Planer planing aid, manual jackplate, dimmer switch, deluxe tube-frame trailer

#### Optional Equipment as Tested (Elite model):

Hydraulic jackplate, adjustable headlights, Garmin 160 sounders, Mercury 200XS outboard, Trophy propeller with DAH rework, tandem-axle trailer with brakes

#### Engine Tested:

Mercury Racing OptiMax 200XS  
 Type: Direct-Injected V-6 two-stroke  
 Displacement: 2.5L (153 cid)  
 Weight (advertised): 400 lbs.  
 Recommended WOT RPM: 6,000-6,500

Gear Ratio:	1.87:1
Propeller:	13¾" x 26" Mercury Trophy 4-blade stainless (reworked by DAH Pro-Pellers)
Jackplate:	Allison manual w/ CMC hydraulic
Setback:	8½" from transom (53¾" from pad end to propshaft)

#### Weather Conditions:

Air Temperature: 86°F  
 Water Temperature: 75°F  
 Wind: 5 mph  
 Water Conditions: Flat to 4" chop; boat wakes

Engine (rpm)	Speed (mph)	TEST RESULTS			Range <sup>1</sup> (miles)
		Fuel (gph)	Fuel (mpg)		
1000	5.6	0.8	6.7	182	
1500	6.9	1.6	4.2	114	
2000	7.8	3.8	2.1	56	
2500	10.9	4.2	2.6	69	
3000	28.4	4.0	7.0	190	
<b>3500<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>36.4</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>201</b>	
4000	42.5	6.4	6.6	180	
4500	50.1	7.8	6.4	172	
5000	62.2	10.4	6.0	161	
5500	69.1	13.1	5.3	142	
6000	75.3	14.4	5.2	141	
6500	79.9	18.5	4.3	117	
6750 (WOT)	82.1	20.0	4.1	111	

<sup>1</sup> Based on 90% fuel capacity  
<sup>2</sup> Optimum cruise speed

#### Allison Boats

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■ Gunwale rod lockers to port and starboard feature disappearing, sliding doors. Running rod racks above each locker have tubes to protect rod tips from elephant-footed friends.



■ *You'll know the built-in lights are more than a gimmick the first time you use them.*

for aerodynamic reasons, the cavities are covered in clear Lexan. On the base Tournament model, these are simple docking lights. On the Elite model we tested, however, they're real driving lights, operated (according to U.S. Coast Guard recommendations) by the driver via a momentary on-off foot switch. A remote control allows the driver to adjust their position on the fly. While you might think this frivolous, the first time you use it you'll say, "Wow, these are handy."

Taping out at more than 32 square feet, the forward casting deck is expensive. The bow panel has room for a Garmin 160 depthfinder, along with the standard trolling-motor plug, trim and light switches. All locker lids are aluminum, and feature high-quality hinges and locking latches. A centerline compartment offers a huge amount of dry storage, and is flanked by twin tackle lockers with Plano trays. Directly behind the center lid is a built-in, 36-quart cooler.

The driver and passenger consoles are where things really get trick.

The passenger console features a glove box accessed in the typical way. However, the entire top of the console hinges forward to reveal stowage underneath. The driver's console lifts the same way to access a very clean, automotive-type wiring system complete with a blade-style fuse panel. The steering wheel is the best in the business — a large-diameter, foam grip Grant unit. Designed for Allison, it features two built-in rocker switches to control engine trim.

Our boat's dash featured Mercury Smart-Craft instruments, including GPS speedometer, multifunction tachometer, trim, water pressure, water temperature, voltmeter and fuel gauges.

The look is high-tech, yet driver friendly — as all gauges are clearly visible at any speed or wheel position. A custom Allison-designed-and-built shifter works smoothly and really dresses up the console.

Underneath, a T-H Marine foot throttle is bolted to a molded-in pad. It should be noted that Allison 'glasses in aluminum backing plates under all major accessories (such as the trolling motor and foot throttle) so they can be tapped, threaded and mounted with machine screws, not wood screws.

#### FOURSOME, ANYONE?

The helm features two adjustable, high-back bucket seats; it's the same design used in Allison's race boats, so they're strong, supportive and comfortable. In addition, the cockpit is large enough to accommodate an optional second row of seats (which can be removed to create more room). Although back-row legroom is cramped, how many 80-mph bass boats will seat four?

Quick-access rod trays flank the driver and passenger seats. Underneath each tray is a sliding-door rod locker (again, one each for driver

and passenger) that features built-in organizers to protect your expensive outfits. Access is only so-so, but we like the way the disappearing doors can be left open while fishing.

In the aft portion of the cockpit is a trash receptacle that uses a standard 5-gallon bucket with removable liners. (It doubles as an emergency head). When closed, the lid serves as a handy step to the aft deck. Once the bucket is removed, the assembly tilts forward so you can service the cartridge-style livewell pumps.

The stern casting deck offers 24 square feet of fishing room, and houses a divided, 38-gallon aerated and timed livewell with pump-out system. The lid should be a dual-door, in our opinion, to allow for easy access without the danger of fish leaping out. Flanking the livewell are huge dry lockers finished with fiberglass innerliners. This is where the trolling motor batteries and battery switch are housed. The aftmost centerline locker holds the 30-gallon fuel tank, as well as the cranking battery and oil reservoir. A custom battery box and built-in oil-tank tray allow for exact placement of these items for precise balancing.

#### THE BOTTOM LINE

In our estimation, the boat's fit and finish are absolutely first class. The little touches add up to one highly refined rig — from recessed cleats to a built-in fire extinguisher holster. Very few options are offered; color schemes, electronics, second-row seating and trailer upgrades round out a rather short list.

What would you pay for a boat this well engineered and equipped? Better sit down. Without engine, the BasSport XB-21 Tournament model lists for \$31,900 with a single-axle trailer. As tested, our Elite package lists for \$51,785. Whew! By any measure, that's at the upper crust of performance bass boats.

This rig's excellent design, overwhelming amenities and countless performance features allow this Tennessee builder to command a premium price. What we feel it needs are two things to make it perfect: SeaStar Pro hydraulic steering and a 250 (or larger) engine. With the XB-21's surefooted and easy handling — combined with 90 mph speeds — it would truly be the hardcore angler's dream Allison. **BWB**

■ *The glove box assembly swings forward to provide access to an even roomier stash. (Below) The new Allison hull runs cleanly at speed. Note the off-centerline trolling motor and dual rod shelves to port and starboard.*

