



Vanquish Boats' owner Morgan Huntley (top right) offers his 24-footer in runabout and center console configurations.



# Pride and **POSSIBILITIES**

By Rich Armstrong / Managing Editor  
Photos by Billy Black

**Morgan Huntley's  
Vanquish Boats is  
turning out a 24-footer  
he believes is right  
for the times**

**M**organ Huntley is a self-described former marina rat from New York with a passion for boats. The confident 31-year-old believes he will find success — even in shaky economic times — with his Vanquish Boats, which builds a 24-footer (25 feet, 8 inches LOA) in two versions.

“Boatbuilding is what I do and what I love. I don’t know how to do anything else, and I’m not going to stop, even if persistently high unemployment tells me to,” says Huntley.

Vanquish Boats began as Vanguard Powerboats in 2003 on the St. Lawrence River in upstate New York, launched by a builder inspired by classic Northeast lake runabouts. He closed shop in 2008. With private backing, Huntley purchased the tooling in March 2010. He set up Vanquish’s office in the Newport (R.I.) Shipyard and production in a marine complex he calls “Fiberglass

RICH ARMSTRONG (TOP)



## SPECIFICATIONS

**LOA:** 25 feet, 8 inches

**BEAM:** 8 feet

**DRAFT:** 19 inches

**DEADRISE:** 16 degrees

**POWER:** single inboard

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Huntley believes that family boaters and megayacht owners alike will appreciate the features of his boat.



Alley" on Broadcommon Road in neighboring Bristol, R.I.

"I thought the design had potential and a good designer behind it," Huntley says. "I felt that Doug Zurn's [modified-vee hull with lifting strakes] was tried and true and a good jumping-off point."

Zurn says the boat was a departure of sorts for his design firm and became his modern interpretation of the Lyman runabouts he grew up with on Lake Erie. "We designed the bottom and chine with more thought given to how to make a boat run dry and not pound," Zurn says, adding that the finished hull he test-drove handled beyond his expectations.

"I like her proportions — the amount of rake in the bow, the sweep of the sheer, the subtle tumblehome," the designer notes. "My favorite feature is her ability to jump out of the hole and onto a plane."

Huntley also grew up with runabouts, though on Long Island Sound. "My parents were avid water skiers and they would drop me in the boat after work before I was even able to walk," he says.

The affinity for boats that his parents passed on to him remains. "Eight out of the last 10 years I have lived aboard," he says, now with his wife, Jen, aboard his 1985 43 Pearson trawler, Madison.

Huntley cut his teeth as a youth at Long Island, N.Y., boatyards, followed by a year at The Landing School in Arundel, Maine, and two years at the International Yacht Restoration School in Newport, where he graduated from the marine systems course. He then worked at The Hinckley Co. and go-fast builder Outer Limits.

"What I learned at Hinckley was the importance they put on service and paying attention to the most minute details," Huntley says. "They ran their company less like a boat company and more like the companies their customers run — doctor's offices and law firms — and that struck me."

At Outer Limits, he learned the value of creating a brand and the importance of nurturing that brand. He also saw firsthand how a well-run shop could efficiently turn out quality semicustom boats. "They were both very different experiences but both very rewarding experiences," Huntley says.

### The boats

Huntley offers his Vanquish boats in runabout and center console configurations. The forward location of the helm on the runabout results in a large cockpit, and the stainless-trimmed windshield adds to its vintage appeal. Prices start at \$120,000. "I think I have a great boat here. Nobody is

building anything like this at this price point," he says.

The 3/4-inch-thick hulls are built by International Marine Repair of hand-laid fiberglass with vinyl ester resins and a vacuum-bagged closed-cell foam core. The boats displace 4,500 pounds and, thanks in part to a prop pocket, draw 19 inches. Beam is 8 feet, and LOA is 25 feet, 8 inches.

Standard power is a Crusader 5.7 HO MPI 330-hp gas inboard, with options for a 375-hp Crusader, Yanmar 6BY2-260 diesel and Hamilton jetdrive. Cruise speed is 32 mph, topping out at 38 mph, with standard power.

Huntley believes his offerings will resonate with family boaters, as well as megayacht owners looking for a stylish tender. He also sees them as entry-level boats for owners who will eventually move up to a 30- to 50-footer in the \$300,000-plus range. He thinks their classic styling will have appeal from Maine to Florida and that potential Midwest customers will appreciate their lake-boat origins. "In New England, it's easy to forget that the vast majority of pleasure boats sold in the U.S. are operated in fresh water," he says. "I have a vision in my head of a 24 Runabout tied up at the dock of some lakeside summer cabin, and I'm pushing to make that a reality."

Vanquish has built six boats so far — yellow runabouts and blue center consoles — and had sold two by the end of the summer. "It's a production build with custom options," Huntley says, noting the optional teak decks, mahogany trim, dodger (center console), Bimini (runabout), bow thruster, and propulsion and electronics choices.

For a customer in Newport, the company removed the port captain's chair and replaced it with L-shaped seating forward that houses a head, wet bar, trash receptacle and room for a Norcold mini-fridge. The new layout accommodates six adults.

Huntley recently hired Chris Lufkin as vice president of sales to handle factory-direct orders and build a dealer network, initially focusing on the New York/New England and Great Lakes areas.

### Repair vs. building

The boatbuilding venture is an offshoot of Huntley's first business, the refit and repair company Morgan Marine Service in Bristol, where he also offers a factory service plan for Vanquish buyers. "We operate the refit/repair business as a co-op," he says. "We have a small crew of general boat techs and work with other colleagues in Newport on various projects. We're a small shop."

Huntley says he decided to become a boatbuilder for a couple of reasons. "First, it's a more satisfying activity [than repair work] in terms of the work-reward ratio," he says. "And the other is that creating the final product is a pursuit of perfection. That's what drew me in."

The company's proximity to more than a dozen marine companies and the experienced craftsmen behind them has its advantages. "My canvas guy is across the parking lot," Huntley says. "Being right in the heart of things is key [to finding] the smartest, most efficient way to build the boat."

And Huntley is convinced he's building a boat for the times. "Consumers want simplicity and value," he says. "Our lives are so technical now with Facebook, iPods, texting and the like. Time with the ones you love should be away from all that, a day enjoyed on the water. A Vanquish is a simple boat. There are not a ton of bells and whistles and gadgets on them. We still build them in a traditional fashion but by using modern time-saving methods of construction." ■