



Our retro sport top on an old Lyman boat. As with all wood boats, repairs are in progress.

Retro sport top fabrication

By Mark Hood, MFC

Years ago, sport tops with tails were considered the norm. In those days, we fabricated them with vinyl that had a denim backing. Most of the frames were vinyl-covered galvanized pipe, not stainless as is standard today. Navy tops made with acrylics are now the accepted standard. When we were asked to make a sport top for an old Lyman, Hood Canvas jumped to the challenge. It had been a while, so we activated our memory cells to pull it off to modern standards. We will stay focused primarily on the aft end of our sport top. This is where the primary differences between sport and Navy tops are, so let's get started.

» For more information, search **tops** at www.marinefabricatormag.com.

Mark Hood, MFC, and his wife, Deb, own and operate Hood Marine Canvas and Hood Marine Canvas Training Workshops in Merrimac, Mass. For more information or to purchase the large binder seen in these articles, visit www.hoodcanvas.com or email mark@hoodcanvas.com; Facebook at www.facebook.com/marinecanvastraining.

RETRO SPORT TOP FABRICATION



1 Deb is fitting the forward edge of our pattern first, so it is smooth between the mid bow and the windshield.



2 Now, after marking the forward edge of the bow from the underside, we release our pattern from the double-sided tape and re-stick. We want our pattern to be smooth between the mid bow and the aft bow. These steps are performed on each side of the boat after initially securing our pattern blank along the center line of the frame and windshield.



3 This is a view from the underside. Notice the marker line from when we fitted the forward section. We now have to draw another line after fitting the aft section. These lines merge near the center of the frame creating a dart of excess material to be removed in later steps.



4 We added another layer of double-sided sticky tape on top of our pattern and stick on a square of pattern material to make our sport top tails. Be sure it lays in smooth and fits the contours of the frame. Now mark the cut line on the aft bow.



5 This is a view from the underside showing the overlap of the tail pattern pieces. Notice the strapping tape at the hold-down strap position inside the tail, so it is hidden. The strapping tape is holding the upward force of our frame preload down the center line of our frame. It is important that the strapping tape is placed at the exact spot that our strap will be when our sport top is completed for proper preload and fit.



6 Back at the shop, we have started working up our pattern. This is the aft end where the top and tails meet. Notice the darts at the mid bow and the tails for proper fit. We have rounded the inside connection between the top section and the tail. This adds a touch of styling and if we were to add side curtains, this would enable the attachment zipper to round the corner.



7 Here we have added a visor extension to bridge the gap between the two tails. Notice again that we have rounded the corners to facilitate a zipper for an aft angle back should the owner ever want one.



8 This is the completed pattern cut apart and ready for fabrication. The cut lines are the finish size so hem allowances will need to be added to all seams.



9 Here the aft end is assembled and stapled in the proper stacking order prior to stitching.



10 We have top-stitched the aft end. Be sure the aft bow pocket is out as shown in the photo. Also notice that the tail and visor are connected as one piece.



11 The bow pocket is flipped to the underside. Notice we have pinned out the center seam prior to stapling the pocket down. Failure to do this with any top will result in a non-even pull and will cause wrinkles when installed.



12 This is the end of the aft pocket, cut up to allow a zipper to pass. We have pinned out the side to remove any waviness prior to stapling the aft pocket down as this is important to the final fit. Notice the cutout for our hold down strap just inside the wing. This is in the exact spot that we had out strapping tape while patterning.



13 Our sport top from the underside, ready to go. We prefer wide reinforcement to narrow as it spreads the load over a larger area and looks better. Notice that we have a seam along the mid bow that incorporates the darts we made and the mid pocket. It is our opinion that darts look unprofessional, and we avoid using them whenever we can. Also, we have a seam on both pieces running fore and aft. This is the selvage edge of the fabric for the least amount of stretch. See our article "Tips for Better Fitting Tops" (May/June 2013 issue) for more details.



14 An inside shot on our customer's Lyman. We installed a slide track on the inside so our top can be booted and slid forward to lay on the dash out of the way. We placed our hold-down straps on the inside of the tails by design. First we needed to preload our top, and that requires a strap or bars to hold the initial pressure. Second, we wanted to hide them, as traditional sport tops use just the fabric tails. As in the photo, we always have a 90-degree angle between our bows for proper loading and an even pull.