

[BOATS]

Sit Down and Save That Back!

Story by Troy A. Buzalsky

Twilight skies erupt as the earth's upper atmosphere scatters and reflects sunlight which illuminates the lower atmosphere. This nautical phase of lighting occurs when the brighter stars are visible making it possible to navigate at sea. It's also considered "Go Time" for the avid angler, who is used to early mornings and unpredictable weather all in an effort to chase their piscatorial dream. Be it smooth waters or torrent seas, the ardent angler is focused on success, and sometimes comfort is an afterthought.

Recently a group of us were heading 30-plus miles offshore to chase halibut and lingcod. Small-craft advisories were in effect, and our vessel narrowly exceeded the size restriction allowing us to cross the bar and head towards the fertile grounds known as the Prairie.

The capable captain was at the helm, and the balance of our group was seated throughout the boat, with one exception. I was assigned to stand front and center as lookout, which meant it was my job to spot sea-born hazards, be it logs, debris, or crab-pot buoys, which typically litter the route. By the time we made it to the Prairie it was clear that standing was a better position than sitting, except for the captain, perhaps, as he was sitting on his suspension seat. The balance of the crew sat in standard marine seats and took an unpleasant beating.

Our adventure to the Prairie produced limits of halibut and lingcod, and even a few rockfish to serve up as fish tacos once ashore. The other thing it served up was a big dose of back pain and boater fatigue from the constant wave-inflicted hammering. We're talking that wincing pain you could see on the crew's face each and every time the boat pounded yet another wind wave or swell. It's fair to say the crew would be running for the Advil once back to the dock.

Often when looking at boats, people focus on the size and style of the boat. They might look at the layout and fishability, and even fret over the colors and graphic packages, but an often-overlooked element are the seats and seating



Bentley's also provides an optional boot which is great looking and also protects the undercarriage from the elements. © Troy Buzalsky

A large advertisement for SeaArk Boats. The main image shows a black Predator boat on a lake, surrounded by trees and mountains. The text "NO EXCUSES" is overlaid in large, red, stylized letters. Below the main image is a collage of smaller images showing various boat models in use. At the bottom, there is a dark blue banner with the SeaArk logo, the website "WWW.SEAARKBOATS.COM", and social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

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system...two things that can make or break a long day on the water.

This column is going to review different seating systems that are all designed for ride comfort, banking on the fact that you can make a great day on the water better while feeling better and traveling farther if you're riding in comfort.

Bentley's Manufacturing

If you follow the boating industry in the Pacific Northwest and have paid any attention to suspension seats, then there's little doubt that you've seen, and most likely sat in, a Bentley's Mariner suspension seat. As an owner of a North River Commander, Bentley's seats come standard which means I have personally placed my derriere in a Bentley's suspension seat for thousands of hours, whether I've been banging big whitewater, crossing the Columbia Bar, or even sitting on an anchor waiting for the rod to buckle.

The logo for Bentley's Manufacturing uses an anchor to help shape the letter B in its name, and the marine marketplace has been front and center since their inception in 1967. Located in Oak Grove, Oregon, a suburb of Portland, immediately adjacent to the Willamette River, in close proximity to the Columbia River and an hour's drive to the Oregon coastline, their location is ideal for boating enthusiasts, dealers, and boat builders.

Bentley's serves as a full-service boat upholstery shop, and their work includes marine tops, mooring covers, custom upholstery, seating accessories, and a large selection of standard marine seats including bucket seats, folding seats, captain chairs, and their Mariner line of suspension seats in both regular and severe duty.

The Bentley's Mariner seat is a true heavy-duty seat system, weighing in at nearly 100 pounds. The 100% steel framework is coated black and features zinc-coated fasteners for corrosion resistance. The engineered design utilizes a patented "knee action" mechanical suspension that incorporates an adjustable spring-assist, self-lubricating shock absorber for suspension travel. The seat base has height and weight adjustability and also features an adjustable backrest, 6" fore and aft slide, and an optional swivel, offering tremendous user adjustability. The severe-duty seat incorporates an additional shock absorber, designed for users over 250 pounds or severe sea situations.

Bentley's is a stickler for quality, and their Mariner seat is manufactured from 28-ounce Boltaflex Vista performance vinyl that features a 100% PVC face, PreFixx protective finish, and is naturally fire retardant (Phthalates free). You can't source higher-quality marine vinyl. Standard designs allow for two color applications, and logos and custom colors are available. Mariner seats are also available with a custom, ballistic-nylon boot that helps protect the chassis from the elements while dressing up the underside of the seat.

Dealers, boat builders, and government-service contractors that include fire and rescue, law enforcement, and the military, including the USCG, count on Bentley's Manufacturing and the Bentley's line of Mariner seats as their suspension seats of choice. Place your derriere in a Bentley's Mariner suspension seat and see why. For more information go to bentleysmfg.com.

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SHOCKWAVE

SHOCKWAVE is a Canadian marine suspension-seat company, and from a boating perspective, that's a good thing! Founded in 1965, marine suspension seats are the cornerstone of both their professional and recreational markets. Located in Sidney, BC, at the northern end of the Saanich Peninsula on Vancouver Island, it would be hard to find a better testing ground for a worldwide marine industry. SHOCKWAVE products are 100% designed, assembled, and manufactured in Canada.

The SHOCKWAVE S5 Suspension Module is SHOCKWAVE's flagship recreational product engineered to provide a more-forgiving ride, enhance on-board safety, and be easily installed in most boating applications. The S5 is designed and pre-drilled to accept most marine seats including the SHOCKWAVE Corbin2 seats. The entire suspension module weighs a mere 20 pounds and is available with a 360-degree swivel, six-inch slide, swivel/slide combo, and lap belt.

Standing less than eight inches in height in its factory setting, the SHOCKWAVE S5 is compact in design, yet offers a full four inches of suspension travel. The base can be raised to an overall height of 10 inches with a simple adjustment. The suspension module is manufactured from cast aluminum that is chromate primed before powder coating, creating a true marine anti-corrosion finish. All assembly hardware is 316 stainless steel



Silver Streak Boats incorporates the SHOCKWAVE S5 suspension system into its boat-building lineup. © Silver Streak Boats

with high life-cycle Delrin bushings. Available in matte black or white finishes, the S5 Suspension Modules are easy to clean and a true piece of art.

The S5 Suspension Module incorporates a pivoting base that allows for an ergonomic four inches of vertical and one and a half inches of forward travel. The suspension utilizes a "marinized" RockShox air-actuated shock absorber that has an adjustable compression-and-rebound setting and can support up to 300 pounds. The onboard toggle switch allows for quickly adjusting the compression setting to soft, medium, and firm. The rebound dial allows adjustment from fast to slow rebound. These two adjustments allow the rider to custom tailor their ride preference.

SHOCKWAVE has a host of loyal users, dealers, and boat builders whose names include The Bay Company, Alaska Frontier Fabrication, Defiance Marine, KingFisher Boats, Silver Streak Boats, Allied Marine, Armstrong Marine (now Brix Marine), Ashbreez Boatworks, North River Boats, and Thunder Jet Boats just to name a few. Fish On Extreme guide Mike Barksdale has SHOCKWAVE S5 suspension modules installed in his 30-foot River Wild open-ocean sled. "I was having performance issues with other suspension seats not lasting even one season," shared Barksdale. "The forces of the Pacific Ocean and at times, big clients, are very hard on seats, and my clients' comfort and safety is important. SHOCKWAVE is a quality product that holds up well and provides outstanding comfort for our anglers."

The SHOCKWAVE Corbin2 seat is designed to pair perfectly with the S5 Suspension Module. The seat is available in onyx black and storm white and manufactured from high-quality, saltwater-resistant marine vinyl that also resists UV rays. Custom upholstery options and logos are available. The seat cushions are manufactured from sturdy and comfortable closed-cell foam and the armrests are designed to fold up out of the way. If you want to feel better and travel farther check out the SHOCKWAVE S5 Suspension Module and Corbin2 seats at shockwaveseats.com.

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=pq9RsTy7E8I



LeeLock Anchor Systems has the most versatile power boat anchor "system" available.

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Made of aluminum that has been anodized to help prevent corrosion. This LeeLock Quick Change Base Bow Roller will last for years of hard use. There are 3 holes for mounting.

As with all the equipment at LeeLock, this Quick Change Base Bow Roller is completely handmade in the U.S.A.

Dealer Inquiries Welcome!

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The cockpit of this Hewescraft is nicely equipped with Smooth Moves Ultra mounts, and the swivel function allows anglers to comfortably turn and watch the aft action. © Troy Buzalsky

Smooth Moves

When you think of Blooming Prairie, Minnesota, you're probably more likely to link it to its origin as a railroad town that originally consisted of endless acres of tall field grass that covered the prairie. In fact, the name evolved to reflect its seasonal beauty back in 1867. With a population of less than 2,000, it's a surprising happenstance that it's the world headquarters for family-owned and operated Smooth Moves, manufacturer and distributor of suspension seats and accessories.

The company's origin dates back to 2010 when co-founder and CEO Kevin Christianson wanted to design a product that would make a day on the water more enjoyable, and ultimately translate into less boater fatigue at the end of the day. Enter the evolution of Smooth Moves, which after a decade of dedication has carved out an incredible reputation in the suspension-seat industry with a loyal following of true hardcore anglers, boat builders, and dealers.

Smooth Moves seat mounts are a stand-alone, shock-absorbing, boat-seat suspension system that comes in one of four designs that incorporate hydraulic or air suspension for pedestal-mounting or floor-mounting applications. They are engineered to be easily installed, easily adjustable, affordable, and backed by a three-year warranty.

The Smooth Moves seat mounts are 10.5 inches in overall height and weigh less than 50 pounds. The pedestal seat-mount version utilizes a Garelick pedestal that is available in 4.75-inch, 6-inch, and 8-inch options to dial the boat into that perfect ride height. The floor-mount models can be mounted on the provided 1.5-inch or 3-inch mounting plate, giving several ride-height options. All seat mounts have a built-in 360-degree locking swivel and 6-inch slide.

The Ultra series is Smooth Moves' spring-assisted, hydraulic seat mount designed for anglers up to 300 pounds. The suspension system has approximately four inches of vertical travel and features an adjustable ride height and spring tension to dial in your ride comfort. To reduce corrosion, all Smooth Moves seat mounts are manufactured from a powder-coated steel frame with zinc-coated springs and a protective rubber boot that looks as good as it functions.

When people use the term "air-ride seats," they might just be speaking of the Smooth Moves Air. Unlike most marine air-ride seats, the Smooth Move Air has a built-in air compressor that's operated with the touch of a button. The seat mount requires a 12V electrical source and can be hardwired or plugged into an accessory port. The Smooth Moves Air not only provides a superior ride, it also is truly heavy duty, with a 350-pound weight-carrying capacity.

Easy installation is a hallmark of Smooth Moves seat mounts, and to assist, they have excellent online instructions as well as video tutorials. Smooth Moves also has an extended dealer and boat-builder network across the United States. American Hall of Fame angler Al Lindner, inventor of the "Lindy Rig," spends countless days on the water and is a Smooth Moves user. He explains, "Like a lot of you, I have had back issues over the years and dreaded those big-water, big-wind days...but not anymore. Since I installed Smooth Moves, those sore-back days are gone." I bet many of you reading this can relate to the pain and fatigue of a long day on the water. For more information go to smoothmovesseats.com.

AirWave Pedestal

If there's one constant in the boat suspension-seat arena it is reducing back pain from constant jarring, making that great day on the water even better. After suffering a back injury, avid outdoor enthusiast Alan Bauman realized that if he was going to continue enjoying his days on the water, he needed to come up with a way to reduce the constant pounding from big waves and long days. After trying several suspension-seat bases on the market, he concluded they were either too light duty or were not made to last more than a season or two. Alan's quest led him into the research and development of a new and innovative seat-suspension system specifically engineered to be ergonomically adjustable to the rider's weight, easy to operate, indestructible, affordable, and 100% American made. Notice, I didn't say lightweight, but that is yet another positive attribute.

After years of research and development, the AirWave Pedestal emerged in 2013 as a patented and ABYC H-31-compliant pedestal suspension seat designed to replace existing pedestal-seat systems.

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Alan and AirWave Pedestal hail from Pine River, Minnesota, which is roughly 100 miles from Lake Superior, and surrounded by countless rivers and lakes, making it an angler's paradise.

The AirWave Pedestal is compact in size, yet huge in performance, standing just 6 inches tall on its 2 7/8-inch tube. Its framework is manufactured from 100% high-strength anodized aluminum coupled with a stainless-steel, scissor-lift-style suspension slide. All working components are 304-316 stainless steel, with UHMW slides, and Delrin rollers creating true corrosion-free and long-lasting construction. The AirWave Pedestal comes with a protective gaiter (boot); however, it's almost too pretty to hide.

With Air in its name, AirWave Pedestal incorporates a STEMCO Goodyear Air Spring into each pedestal. This unique feature is the number one defense against impact, taking the hit and comfortably absorbing the shock. The air-spring performance is made possible with AirWave's patented manifold and accumulator tube (AKA pulse tube), which regulates the compression and reaction. This means there's no harsh rebound, just a nice, smooth ride.

The AirWave Pedestal is adjusted with a provided hand pump and corresponding weight chart. Simply pump the pulse tube to the recommended weight, and voila, the seat is set, and will only need adjusting if the rider's weight changes.

As mentioned earlier, the AirWave Pedestal is incredibly light, weighing just 10 pounds, which is amazing. Although most of the dealer network for AirWave is located in the Midwest, they have earned the trust of Vexus Boats out of Flippin, Arkansas, and are now standard equipment. More in line with the Pacific Northwest, Stabicraft has jumped onboard as an AirWave user, equipping their Ultracab line of severe-duty boats. In addition, if you're a skinny-water jet boater, MotoJet out of Lewiston, Idaho, has incorporated these compact pedestals into their rocket-ship mini-jet boats with huge success. For more information go to airwavepedestal.com.

TEMPRESS

When we hear the echo across the water, "Fish-On!" it gets our blood boiling, indicating the fish are biting. It also serves as the name for the most-popular rod holder in the United States, the TEMPRESS Fish-On! Rod Holder, with multiple millions sold worldwide.

Known for making excellent rod holders,

The TEMPRESS ProBox is available in a one-piece model, or in an easily collapsible version. © TEMPRESS Products

TEMPRESS Products, located in Dallas, Texas, is a leader in the development, manufacturing, and distribution of high-quality marine, aftermarket, and OEM products, including boat seats.

TEMPRESS offers a wide variety of marine seats for various boating applications. These include benches, Casting Series Seats, Profile Guide Series, All-Weather Series, NaviStyle Series, Elite Helm Series, and their ProBax Orthopedic Series.

Most likely the only marine seat on the market designed specifically to save your back, the TEMPRESS ProBax Orthopedic Boat Seat is in a class by itself. After having two back surgeries and two hip replacements myself, it's refreshing to see a seat manufacturer actually targeting a much-needed sector of the fishing industry, where we need comfort and support that is properly designed for on-the-water applications.

Identifying the need in the industry, TEMPRESS teamed up with leading spinal surgeons and ergonomic experts to create the patented ProBax Orthopedic Boat Seat—the only seat clinically proven to provide optimal long-term back and upper-body support.

As humans, when we sit down, we typically form a parabolic C-shaped curve...a totally unnatural shape. Because of this, the shoulders tend to come away from the seatback, and they will come forward. Your head weighs about as much as a bowling ball. That ten pounds of weight is very bad on the neck, shoulders and back, which leads to fatigue. The C-shaped spinal position also unevenly pressurizes your discs, which makes movement painful and potentially dangerous to the surrounding muscles and discs. The genius behind the ProBax Orthopedic Seat design is to get the angler's back and spine in the upright, natural, S-shaped curve, thus aligning the head, neck, and shoulders for proper balance.

The ProBax Orthopedic Series is available in both the folding two-piece model and the one-piece, non-collapsible Captain's Seat with optional integrated armrests. Available in the standard color palettes, the ProBax Seats are also available in limited-edition colors, as well as their artistic and camouflage color patterns.

The meat and potatoes of the ProBax is its patented base and back dual-core foam support system which gives the correct support where it's needed. This creates better seated posture and allows for long sitting sessions and repetitive fishing motions. With ergonomics and safety in play, all seats are ABYC H-31 compliant and manufactured for extreme marine use. Heavy-duty, 30-ounce marine vinyl is utilized, complete with enhanced UV protection and water-resistant assembly techniques.

The TEMPRESS ProBax seats are truly designed to save your back while increasing ride comfort. Imagine mounting a ProBax to one of the above-mentioned suspension-seat bases, and you might just have found boating utopia. For more information on the TEMPRESS ProBax go to tempress.com.

Troy Buzalsky is the Boats columnist for Fish Alaska magazine, and when not writing about boats or working his career in the fire service, Troy can likely be found chasing fish in the Pacific Northwest and the 9th state and writing about those adventures. Troy can be reached at troybuz@comcast.net.

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