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## J.D. Power Best Boat Votes of 2002 - 2003

From [Jim Shepard](#),  
Your Guide to [Powerboating](#).  
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### Tally of the Votes

J.D. Power & Associates, a well known and respected marketing information company, recently released its 2002/2003 "Customer Satisfaction Report" for seven (7) of the most popular production boat categories in the United States. The boat categories are: **Fiberglass Bass Boats**, **Small Runabouts** (16-19 feet), **Large Runabouts** (20-29 feet), **Express Cruisers** (24-33 feet), **Coastal Fishing** (17-28 feet), **Pontoon Boats** and **Ski/Wakeboard Boats**.

The overall report shows an increase in customer satisfaction with sales and service. The categories of Coastal Fishing Boats and Express Cruisers showed the most improvement. Boat owners, however, consistently report lower levels of satisfaction than do people purchasing automobiles.

This survey confirms the old adage (which I have mentioned in previous articles): "*You get what you pay for.*" The highest rated boats are the most expensive and the the lowest rated are the least.

In the **Small Runabout** category (16-19 feet), *Crownline* has the top rating, with *Chaparral* a close second. *Bayliner* had the lowest rating in this class. **(Please see the table, below.)**

The **Large Runabout** (20-29 feet) category shows *Cobalt* is rated highest in all categories, with very high marks for styling and quality. *Crownline* and *Sea Ray* also did well. As with the Small Runabout category, *Bayliner* had the lowest ratings. (To view the actual ratings, head to the [J. D. Power Consumer Center](#) and select "Large Runabout" from the drop-down menu.)

In the **Express Cruiser** (24-33 feet) category *Sea Ray* was rated #1, with the largest year over year improvement in customer satisfaction. They received the top rating in all six (6) criteria used in the survey, *Wellcraft* received the lowest rating. (To view the actual ratings, head to the [J. D. Power Consumer Center](#) and select "Express Cruiser" from the drop-down menu.)

I noticed, with some disappointment, that this survey does not include the actual forms submitted by the boat owners. As I understand it, these forms are sold back to the boat manufacturers to use as they see fit. It surely would be valuable to read about the actual experiences - good and bad - the owners had when dealing with service and warranty problems. This type of feedback is exactly what a boat shopper needs to make the best possible informed decision.

I will have some more observations and comments on the other categories in the next article. Stayed tuned!

### J.D. Power Ratings - Small Runabouts (16-19 ft.)

Boat Builder	Overall Rating	Quality & Reliability	Value for Money	Exterior	Ride & Handling	Features
Crownline	5	5	5	5	5	4
Chaparral	5	5	3	5	4	5
Four Winns	4	3	4	4	4	4
Sea Ray	4	3	4	4	3	4
Glastron	3	3	3	3	3	5
Bayliner	2	3	3	2	3	3

## Suggested Reading

[Is A Quality Boat Worth the Money?Your First Boat](#)

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