Exterior Enclosure “A Back Porch”



Figure 1 - Full cockpit enclosure for a Catalina 350

Good friends of ours who we travel with on Lake Ontario had a new boat delivered with a full cockpit enclosure last year which, when I first saw it, seemed like a good idea but there were too many canvas pieces to mess with. After a 2 week cruise with them featuring a series of days where sunshine and heavy showers alternated by the hour and very heavy mosquito appearances occurred each evening, I began to warm to the idea.

My Catalina 350 was delivered with the factory dodger and bimini and during the first summer we had already had two “side pieces” made that would connect to the filler piece between the dodger and the bimini to have rain water not fall in the cockpit. (Those were $300 made by a “startup” canvas person – this is the rolled up piece in Figure 2). A full enclosure would require 5 more panels; a side panel for each stern quarter and 3 across the back including a center panel that covered the access area to the stern deck. I wanted a full screen enclosure as well as the windows to have rain as well as mosquito protection.



Figure 2 – Full enclosure with the original dodger, bimini and filler piece

I contacted a number of canvas people until I found an interested, available, and experienced canvas person to do the full enclosure (there is a big demand for these people in August here!). We discussed the specifications which went well except that the stern rail with the seats, motor mount, flag, grill etc. was a big issue and would require an expensive and complex workaround. In the interest of speed and money we agreed that the cover would run from the aft seam of the bimini directly down to the outside of the cockpit leaving all the stern rail issues behind the enclosure. Although this is a compromise, the aft panels can be unzipped half way to make access to the stern seats easily.



Figure 3 – Full screens and canvas from the bimini to the cockpit

This job took the canvas person 2 days and cost a mere $1675 (not even 2 boat units). We are very pleased with the job as it provides a huge three season breezeway which we used extensively this fall. I am sure it will also be a benefit in the spring (cold north winds) and the summer (warm mosquito nights). I would recommend it to all Catalina 350 owners. The only downside (aside from the cost); is you have to be good with zippers – there are 21 of these to go from open cockpit with bimini folded to full screen enclosure, but it is worth it!



Figure 4 – Inside the screened "back porch"

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