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Comitti Portofino
Specifications
 Length: 24 ft., 7 in.
 Beam: 7 ft., 6 in.
 Draft: 1 ft., 8 in.
 Dry weight (w/engine):
 4,100 lbs.
 Fuel capacity: 80 gals.
 Base price: \$185,000

La Dolce Vita

COMITTI'S PORTOFINO 26
 EMBODIES THE SWEET LIFE



In the late 1950s, Italy was marked by what has become known as *il miracolo economico*, "the economic miracle." The war was over and Italy's economy began in earnest its transformation from agrarian to industrial and urbanized. Optimism ruled the day and cities flourished as the country's youth enjoyed *La Dolce Vita*, "The Sweet Life." Federico Fellini's 1960 film of the same name even captured the feeling with scenes of wanton joy in Rome's Trevi fountain.

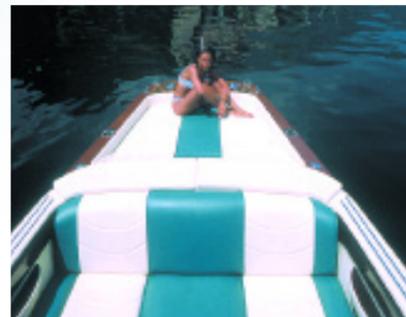
It was during this time, on the shores of Lake Como just north of

Milan, that Mario Comitti set to work building high-speed wooden launches. The idea was to combine the Italian passion for speed with experimental hull designs in a way that reflected the sense and verve of the time. Classic looks above the waterline, a flared bow and a tumblehome stern were a few of the trademark elements, all of which have been maintained throughout the years.

The shape under the waterline, however, saw plenty of evolution. The early experimental hulls bore a mostly flat underside, and Comitti's son, Elia, had plenty of success racing these early craft, winning trophies as well as earning a great reputation for his father's boats. Soon, however, the company developed a deep-V hull that improved handling characteristics and conditions for the popular activity of waterskiing.

Mahogany and oak are used to ensure a solid hull construction, and Comitti utilizes the wood epoxy saturation technique (WEST) and vacuum bag lamination for a tight seal. Topside, full-length mahogany planks are vacuum fastened with epoxy with two diagonal layers of solid mahogany veneer offset at 45 degrees. The topside is then conditioned with a sealer and coated with Stoppani varnish, which is buffed to a high shine.

The Portofino seen here is in the middle of Comitti's line of five mahogany boats, which range from 18 feet to 34 feet. Notable optional features include a refrigerator, an AM/FM CD player, a freshwater shower, a hidden convertible top and marine leather upholstery. Engine options for the Portofino include a gasoline 6.2 liter 320 hp MerCruiser MPI with Bravo III stern drive and a 270 hp MerCruiser diesel stern drive. Top speed with the 6.2 liter engine is 55 mph. Inboard shaft drive also is available. The base price of \$180,000 includes ocean freight and U.S. Customs. More info: www.comittigroup.com.



MY PRECIOUS — John Rogers, Eric Bartos and Blake Liebeskind with their incredible catch.

Jamie Artzt, photos

THE RETURN OF THE RING

You can call it chance. You can call it fate. You can even call it unbelievable. We call it one of the best fish stories of all time.

The tale starts more than two years ago on December 28, 2002, when fishing buddies Eric Bartos, Blake Liebeskind and Jamie Artzt set out in Liebeskind's boat, *Running Barely*, for an afternoon of fishing off Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Bartos was brooding about his recent breakup with his wife and the looming divorce.

In true guy-think fashion, the three decided that if they landed a sailfish, Bartos would slip his ring on its bill before releasing the fish back into the ocean. A symbolic gesture of new beginnings and letting the sea cleanse away old wounds.

Sure enough, they caught a sailfish and carried out the ceremony. The attitude at that point was one of "That's done, time to move on."

Fast-forward more than two years to January 22, 2005. The same three pals and a couple of extras come together for the Miami Beach Rod & Reel Club's Interclub Sailfish Challenge, this time on Artzt's boat, *Pineapple*. The day of the ring is now a distant memory.

A rather dismal day of fishing follows and the troupe has nothing to show for its efforts. Just before tournament officials call takes-out, however, a sailfish surfaces to take the bait on one of the remaining few lines in the water. Bartos springs to action on the reel, but the lines get tangled and



the fish is considered lost. Bartos keeps working the reel all the same, and the line surprisingly snaps tight again with the sailfish still on.

About 10 minutes later the crew stood in silent shock and awe. Bartos had just reeled in the same fish he had slipped his ring on more than two years earlier — a statistical equivalent of winning the lottery. After the initial shock wore off, the crew quickly snapped a few photos, Bartos took his ring back as a trophy and they released the fish back to the sea, only now it had a little pale ring of flesh on its bill where Bartos' ring had been.

The story quickly spread out from the Florida fishing community and even made mention on NBC's *Today Show*. And, because anglers are famous for telling less-than-honest whoppers from time to time, the boys even volunteered for a polygraph to test their veracity — they all sailed through the test with flying colors.