



Ask Dr. Gel

by Dave Weakley

Dave Weakley is the owner of American Boat Restoration and has been keeping boaters afloat in fine trim and good repair for over 40 years.



"Email me or call me with your questions! I'll be happy to help you out"

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The Hull Truth



Pristine 1987 Boston Whaler sits on a misfit trailer.

This summer a boat owner called and asked me to look at damage he had on his hull. He was considering selling it and wanted it repaired. While examining the boat I asked "Why would you want to sell such a beautiful boat?" He went on to say it was too much work for him and his wife to put on and off their combo roller and short bunk trailer. When putting the boat back on the trailer his wife had to get in the water to guide the boat on. It was a two person undertaking and he could not do it by himself. His 1987 15' Boston Whaler Striper model was in pristine condition! The owner bought it new and customized it to his liking. It was in truly showroom condition with the exception of the damage on the hull. A gem sitting on an inadequate trailer! I looked over the hull and saw a hole in the fiberglass, gelcoat and additional fiberglass cracks and fractures. I then examined the configuration of the trailer. It was not properly fitted to the boat and was the cause of serious damage. The weight of the boat was sitting on the keel roller causing the hull to fracture. I told the boat owner we could fix the hole and fractures no problem but I highly recommended to modify the trailer and make it support the boat properly so no more damage could occur and it will also be user friendly. He wanted to proceed so I did the repairs and trailer modifications converting the rollers to bunks. Now the entire bottom of the boat has good support the entire length of the hull, hauling is also more stable and smoother. The boat launch is a much more pleasant time and haul out can be a one person operation.

After the repairs and trailer modifications were completed the boat owner and his wife went boating and sent us this email after. I hope he keeps his boat!

"Dave and Dee,

Just wanted to give Dave a brief report on how the boat trailering went.

We trailered it to Barton's Cove and launched the boat. After putting the trailer into the water to the point of covering the fenders, as Dave emphasized, I was able to launch itbut not until that depth was used...could not budge it off the bunks before that....I understand now that the idea is to get the buoyant force of the water to lift the boat off the bunks!.....retrieval was very easy....never easier....did it without help from Ellie who was standing by dreading having to assist....this fact may now result in our going out onto the water more often. Also, it seemed like there were many fewer noises from the trailer while driving....a nice solid feel....thanks for a great job! Bill"

Another roller trailer causes damage to a hull:

Shortly after completing the repair on the Boston Whaler trailer I received a call from another boat owner with hull damage that happened at the boat launch as he was putting his boat back on the trailer. The boat floated on crooked multiple times between the rollers and the hull scraped on the roller brackets. The owner was frustrated to the point he wanted to sell his boat! He and his wife loved the boat but hated using the nightmare trailer. After researching their options and cost they found it was much cheaper to buy a new properly adjusted trailer than to modify their old one.

Unfortunate hull damage caused by the roller trailer.



Helpful tips if you do have a roller trailer:

Frank T. from Albany, NY asked:

"My trailer is my boat's worst enemy. I have a roller trailer and every time I put my boat on it the boat ends up crooked. The trailer has caused damage to the gelcoat and fiberglass on the keel and around bow eye. Is there anything I can do without buying a new trailer?"

First of all, it is possible you may be backing your trailer in the water too deep. A rule of thumb is to back your trailer in far enough to just submerge your fenders. Keep in mind every trailer is different! Roller trailers do tend to load best in relatively shallow water.

Secondly, you want to make sure your trailer has been adjusted properly to fit your boat. We can check it or you can take it to your favorite marina. You want to be sure your rollers are running between the strikes. The bow stop on the winch stand should be wide enough so you don't have to be a sharp shooter to hit the center. There are also guide posts that can be installed on the trailer. Just remember they are guides not bumpers!

Personally, I prefer bunk trailers over roller trailers. I would not own one if it was given to me. I fix damage all the time caused by roller trailers. Each roller supports only approx. 4"- 6" square area of the hull. In some cases if you look carefully along the bottom of your boat you may see indentations the rollers cause. Roller trailers also have more moving parts and require more maintenance. It is best to have a drive on bunk trailer in my opinion. In most situations a roller trailer can be converted into a bunk trailer. A properly adjusted bunk trailer will support the entire hull!

Roller trailers do keep us busy!