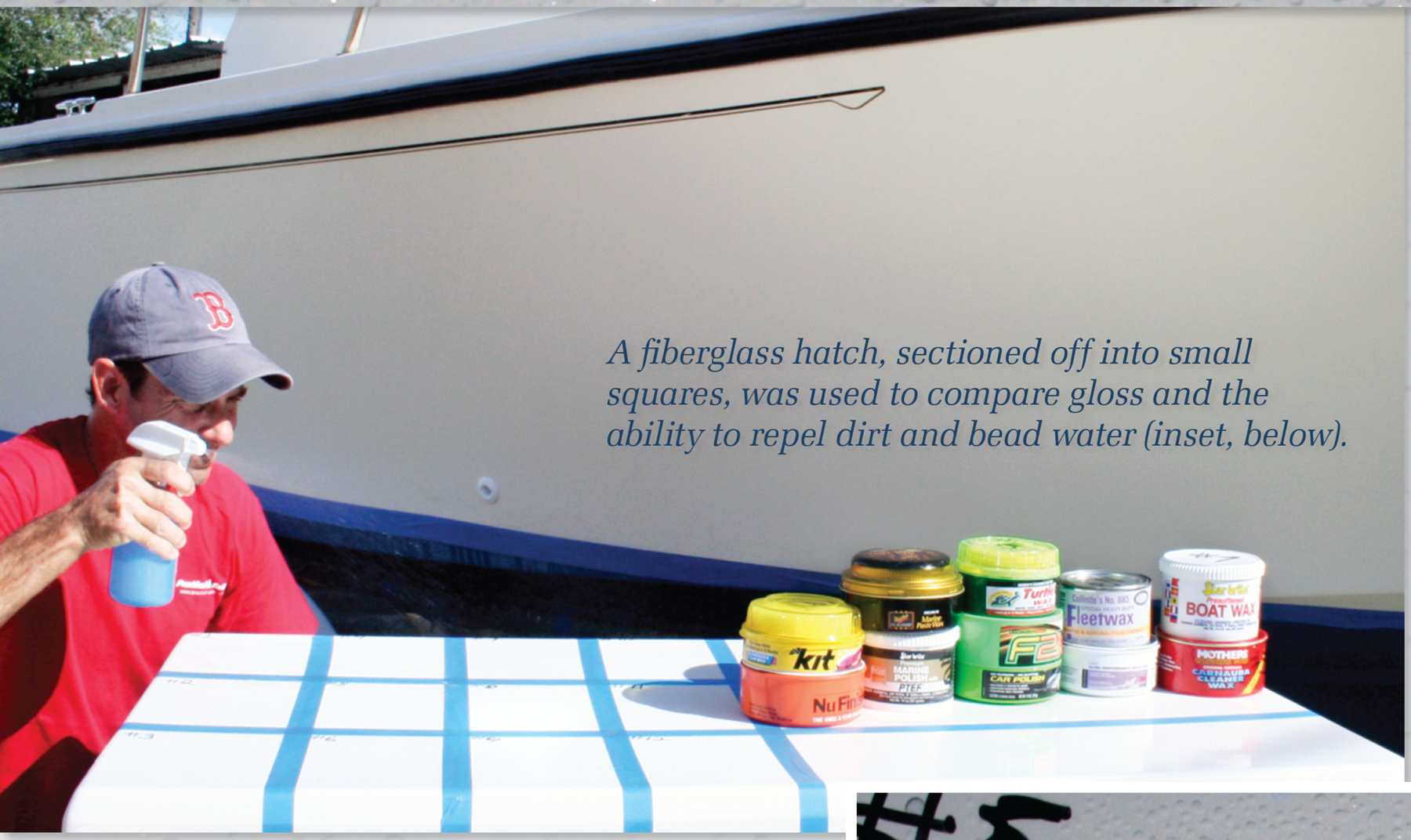

A fiberglass hatch, sectioned off into small squares, was used to compare gloss and the ability to repel dirt and bead water (inset, below).

Lather, Rinse, Dry, Repeat . . .

The products were marked and tested in random order.

An old 3-foot by 5-foot white fiberglass hatch cover was compounded, micro-polished with 3M Finesse-It II, washed, and dried. A grid was laid out on the cover with masking tape. One application of each wax was applied to a 6 x 6-inch square, following instructions, and buffed by hand.

The finish was observed and rated in the sunlight, sprayed with a mist of fresh water and the relative beading rated. The hatch cover was taken into a dark room, and an LED flashlight was held over each polished square. The degree of clarity of the reflected LEDs in each test square was rated by five testers.

In addition, the waxes were applied as directed to larger areas of a 21-foot Parker outboard runabout, and the ease of application and resulting shine were tabulated. (See Value Guide, page 34.)

While some makers say their wax "will last a year," most suggest a touch-up polish once or twice a year. Obviously, the thickness of the coating will vary by product, and this might affect longevity. Although none of the cans explicitly recommended multiple coats, it is suggested in some product literature.

Although it might seem like more work, testers found that they could apply two coats of some of the softer products in the same amount of time it took to apply and buff out the harder finishes.

Ease of application covers both how easily a product goes on and how easily it comes off. Newer products are making a point out of "no buffing required," and this significantly speeds up application. For some of the hardest products from Collinite and 3M, a variable-speed buffer is highly recommended, particularly for first application.