

BY JASON Y. WOOD

Watch and Learn

GET A HANDLE ON YOUR DATA WITH GARMIN'S QUATIX 5 SAPPHIRE.

Be careful what you wish for: Wearable devices seem like they may be a great way to get more connected with your boat. After all, think of how that smartphone gives you the freedom to roam away from your computer in the afternoon (or if you fish, the morning) and get down to the dock, all while still staying in touch with your job and the people who count. But as the saying goes, freedom isn't free. That's where the Garmin Quatix 5 Sapphire (\$850 MSRP; garmin.com) comes in. This is Garmin's next-generation smartwatch that links to your boat's compatible Garmin helm system and your smartphone, and exacts a special kind of charge from its wearer.

The Quatix is based on Garmin's Fenix fitness watch. The Quatix 5 Sapphire is waterproof to more than 300 feet and has a sapphire crystal and a stainless steel bezel set on a fiber-reinforced polymer case. It comes with silicone and stainless quick-change bands that let the user alter the style of the watch—this is good-looking, rugged design. Its 1.2-inch transreflective memory-in-pixel display uses ambient light to brighten to sunlight-viewable levels, but in the dark I found myself hitting a button to illuminate the display.

The Quatix 5 has built-in positioning with both GPS and GLONASS, and, aside from delivering a host of features with that functionality, the system has a real effect on battery life. When you've activated a feature that uses the GPS, the result cuts battery life to 24 hours from two weeks in smartwatch mode, according to Garmin. Don't worry, though; it comes with a USB charging cable, and I kept it charged each night. I set the device to track my movements and then saved my track and watched the route populate on the chart of the GPSMap 742 multifunction display that I had synced with the Quatix.

Syncing is easy: Access the Boat Data feature and it asks you to enable "Garmin wearables" on your chartplotter (it connects via the chartplotter's Wi-Fi—this doesn't work with just any Garmin unit, but there are too many to list here), which is a couple of menus deep in the settings. Once you sync the watch you can access boat speed, depth, and water temperature. It's pretty cool, and based on how things are trending in the world of consumer electronics, it wouldn't surprise me if future software updates will bring even more functionality through the chartplotter link.

But the Quatix has plenty of features, even without connecting to the helm—a built-in GPS will do that for you. It can give you local tide information—remember Quatix knows where you are on the globe—and it can track your course, meaning the course the watch takes, rather than the boat. I can see this feature coming in handy



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when strolling the dimly lit, winding streets of some unfamiliar port, trying to find the dinghy dock after dinner.

The watch also has an anchor alarm with a programmable drift radius—a terrific backup feature. When I tested it, the watch signaled when we were leaving the safe zone I had set by chirping softly and vibrating on my wrist. I thought to myself that it should probably have a louder alarm, but after I thought about it, I realized the vibration would wake me, and the sound-and-vibration combo on a unit strapped to your arm is akin to a horn accompanied by flashing red lights on a helm display or even a smartphone. Score one for the wearable: Not everyone has to be awakened. Oh, and if you happen to leave the watch on your nightstand, the vibration is urgent enough to get your attention. Trust me. I would be curious to test it from the amidships master stateroom deep inside a steel-hulled superyacht. You know, for science.

The smartwatch has a sailing race timer for those who enjoy regattas, and a fish counter for anglers who are so successful they lose count of the number of fish they catch, and it even notes where and when you caught them. One problem I had with these features, particularly the fish counter, was that I couldn't figure out how to turn them off. For controls, the Quatix has five buttons arrayed around the case, and it's fairly intuitive. But interestingly for touchscreen-happy Garmin, where user-interface is king, there are some blips. As on the

fishing app, the menu item you're looking for may not come up when you think it will. A search online yielded no insight, and I ended up powering down the watch in frustration the first few times. Finally I found the app exit prompt in a settings menu.

The Quatix does a bunch of the stuff fitness watches do, such as tracking steps, and timing and measuring the distance of your run, swim, bike, or paddle on a kayak or SUP. It even gives you golf course information through the Garmin Connect app on your smartphone, which lets you manage data and settings—a powerful friend to have. I synced mine to my iPhone 6 and there's a lot more graphical representation of my activity levels there than I'll ever use, but it's there if I need it.

There's a lot I didn't explore: For example, the watch can sync with an onboard Fusion stereo and let you control the tunes. Also, there's a way to control a compatible Garmin GHC 20 autopilot, but I didn't get to test that and therefore I cannot recommend it.

So, will the Quatix make your life better? If you like to track data of the activities you love and analyze it, then yes, it will. At times, I appreciated the way the watch displayed texts and emails that came up on my synced smartphone—I could tuck the phone away in a helm drawer and still stay connected. But is it an improvement, in that I'm paying more attention to the various screens in my life while I'm on the water? That's something we can only decide for ourselves. After all, the Quatix is also a wristwatch, reminding its wearer of the passage of time. What we each do with our time is ultimately up to us. □



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