

NEXRAD on a budget

BY MICHAEL CABAN, DALLAS, TEXAS

When I was living in Tampa, Florida, the thunderstorm capital of North America (perhaps even the world), my goal was to get Nexrad weather into my cockpit at the lowest possible cost. I started by using one of the Garmin auto/marine GPSMAP units equipped with the GXM30 low-profile XM radio receiver. I chose the GPSMAP 376C because it was readily available and already superseded by newer models, which made the purchase cost quite low. The 376C can be purchased for about one-third the cost of an aviation GPSMAP396 (via Ebay in new or open box/display model condition).

Of course the 376C has none of the highly touted navigation and database of airports, intersections, airspace, etc. But for my purposes, this was not an issue. I already had equipment in an aviation panel-mounted IFR-certified GPS with moving-map display and a small battery-powered handheld GPS with database.

I simply wanted to get the important Nexrad capability in my plane for strategic inflight decision-making. It does not hurt that the 376C is a WAAS-capable GPS unit for an emergency navigation backup in the event of a complete electrical failure or panel-mounted GPS equipment failure.

I found the XM's Sailor Weather package gave me high resolution Nexrad and many other helpful weather products to work with: surface analysis weather maps; precipitation type at surface; surface wind speed and direction; surface analysis forecast chart for 12, 24, 36 and 48 hours; and airport observations (you look them up on the 376C as "transportation" facilities and then click "Find" then "weather data") including wind speed and direction, visibility, barometric pressure and sometimes ceiling, when reported.

So if you can't swing the price of the GPSMAP 396 or the GPSMAP 496, a system like this can give you some affordable inflight situational weather awareness.

If this article helps you in any way, pay it forward and take a young person flying with you on your next hamburger run!

Mounting my GPSMAP 376C (as well as other Garmin GPSMAP clones)



Fig. 1 - We started with the base of the stock Garmin marine mount. This base is mounted to the center of the yoke by removing the 12 o'clock position screw in the center circular plate. I replaced the short screw from the Cygnet yoke with a #8-32 x1/2" stainless steel screw and screwed the base of the Garmin marine mount in its 12 o'clock position to the yoke.



Fig. 2 - Place the marine mount with your GPSMAP onto the base disc that you just attached to the yoke. You can see the clearance available under the stock Cygnet flight desk.



Fig. 3 - The unit with the flight desk removed from its mounting pedestal. In this position, I received plenty of satellites and had WAAS position accuracy of 9' within about 10 minutes.



Fig. 4 - The GPSMAP in a somewhat stowed position without the flight desk.



Fig. 5 - The GPSMAP when stowed with the flight desk in place for use.



Fig. 6 - This is the "plain language" METAR interpretation that you get. Wind (speed and direction), visibility and ceiling. This works for me! By the way, this is exactly what is being broadcast at the time by ATIS/AWOS at the field.





Fig. 7 - These clips from True Value Hardware keep the wires in place, eliminating dangling wire hell in your cockpit.



Fig. 8 - With Garmin GPSMAP screen cover.



Fig. 9 - Full panel with GPSMAP in stowed position and GXM30 antenna in place on glareshield. No compass issues, since magnets were removed, via the procedure outlined by NUMA Aviation at <http://www.numa.aero/GXM30.html>

Fly Smart with the ABS Platinum Visa[®]



American
Bonanza
Society

Call today to apply for the ABS Platinum Visa. You'll get:

- **FREE** Getaway Miles Air Travel & Vacation Rewards Program – each dollar spent earns points toward air travel and vacation rewards.
- **FREE** \$5,000 Personal Identify Theft coverage – covers ID theft expenses incurred if your identity is stolen
- **FREE** Auto Rental Collision Coverage
- **FREE** Zero Liability Protection on unauthorized transactions

Take off with the **ABS Platinum Visa today!** Simply call **800-222-7458** to apply.

The American Bonanza Society is pleased to partner with INTRUST Bank, an outstanding financial institution located in Wichita, Kansas – home of the Beech Bonanza!

ABS Platinum Visa

provides valuable financial support for ABS.



INTRUST Card Center[®]

Unique to the ABS Visa — Parts discount through Beech's RAPID!