



TABS Ocean Series 6.0 (November 2006)

Words - Bernard Clancy

The search for the right fishing boat can be thirsty work, but in the TABS Ocean Series 6.0, Bernard Clancy has found a spacious rig that most anglers would love to call their own

When Michael Mizzi of the Knox Boat Fishing Club in Victoria went looking for a new boat he did his homework. As the former owner of an original 18ft Shark Cat he knew what he wanted.

Michael looked at a number of marques before deciding on a TABS Ocean Series 6.0. He couldn't be happier. It was Michael's boat we used for this test. Although fairly new, Michael had tricked it up well. He'd used it off Bermagui, for bream fishing at Lakes Entrance, and on both Port Phillip and Westernport bays chasing snapper, bream and the like. In some areas of the Gippsland Lakes and Westernport, the boat's shallow draft comes in very handy, Michael says.

The TABS 6.0's Mercury 150 EFI offered plenty of grunt but a substantial amount of that power was lost in prop cavitation during hard work, particularly turning. Dropping the motor a notch on the transom would probably solve the problem. Otherwise the boat rode well and actually turned very flat. Stability is good, thanks to its wide reverse chines.

The hull is foam-filled – an improvement on its big brother, the 6.5, which has only an air-tight cavity beneath the cockpit sole. Made from 5mm plate bottom and 4mm plate sides, the TABS hull is fairly conventional for a large tinnie. It has a spacious cuddy for mum (including an aftermarket Sanipotti) without compromising fishing space. It's fairly well appointed and finished and is practical.

The cabin is very wide due to the broad-shouldered hull shape and is lined and carpeted in black-grey tones. Underbunk storage compartments are carpeted and covered with practical vinyl cushions. Portholes either side and twin lights over the parcel shelves brighten a fairly dim interior. The black, padded vinyl parcel shelves are adequate and the open bulkhead is covered with a canvas clip-on curtain for privacy.

COCKY COCKPIT

The cockpit seats are solid alloy with armrests, good padding and moulding, and are also in the colour scheme of black/grey. The driver's seat is adjustable forward and back but not vertically. Both seats have footrests and are mounted on storage bins holding pullout tackle boxes and topped with rear-facing cushioned dicky seats for lure-watching, which would be comfortable enough for short periods.

The bulkhead instrument panel has twin multipurpose Mercury Optimax gauges that cover everything and even leave a little room to spare. Both the marine radio and CD player are mounted in front of the passenger seat. There is a small grabrail in front and over the CD player and an open storage box is to the left. The EPIRB is mounted in the corner and the fire extinguisher is located under the motor controls.

The five-piece wraparound perspex windscreen is centrally supported by two alloy poles, but there are no grabrails here.

The carpeted cockpit has plenty of working room and the gunwales are quite high and wide enough to dance on, although they lacked non-skid panels. The four rodholders are made of plastic and there is a raised grabrail on the outer side of the gunwales. Huge rear bollards on the 'whale tail' stern (as they call it) look big enough to hold the largest gaffed, thrashing shark. Side pockets are large enough for odds and ends, gaffs and small rods. An underfloor kill tank almost right across the transom just in front of the bilge has a removable bin and would hold some very large fish.

The bimini features a front awning beyond the windscreen made from a strong mesh material that lets water through but not the sun. It clips back to a strong, six-pot rocket launcher. The all-around clears are necessary to keep out the occasional flick of water. Outriggers are mounted on the sides of the cuddy.

The padded transom features a deep walkthrough door on the port side as well as a smallish livebait tank and a chest-high baitboard, complete with four stainless rodholders for light rods and a unique caravan tap and a knife sharpener. Great ideas.

Underneath are two wide hatches, through which you can access the twin batteries and oil bottles. A second, larger fire extinguisher is mounted here as well.

The engine-mount deck features a telescopic ladder and there are large grabrails either side.

TAKE A BOW

At its pointy end, the boat is equipped with a basic bowroller that carries the Sarca combination anchor on a South Pacific 800F anchor windlass, which has twin open rope hatches either side.

When you need to access it, it's no trouble to worm through the cuddy's glass hatch. The split bowrail is aluminium and very strong, as is the alloy cleat behind it.

In calm water, we achieved a top speed of 62km/h at 5500rpm (GPS recorded) from the 150 EFI. Cruising offshore in a small but choppy sea was comfortable at 40km/h at 3500rpm. The TABS' large chines, coupled with a strake each side of the hull, keeps the boat very upright in turns. Try as we might we could not get the boat to lean into a turn or slip through tight turns. It simply hangs on, the prop letting go (cavitating) before the hull does.

The big tinnie backs down well, with no sign of water coming through the transom gate. The hull is not self draining and doesn't need to be.

Driven sensibly, the TABS performed well. Pushed a bit hard in a lumpy sea the ride was not as smooth, as is the case in almost all tinnies. It's just a matter of finding a comfortable speed and sticking to it.

HIGHS

- Spacious cuddy
- Wide gunwales
- Spacious cockpit

LOWS

- Prop cavitation
- Seat height
- Slow in rough water

TABS OCEAN SERIES 6.0
HOW MUCH?
Price as tested: \$61,000
Options fitted: 150 XL EFI, baitboard, bimini and clears, tackle boxes, Sanipotti
Priced from: \$52,620
GENERAL
Material: Aluminium plate
Length overall: 6.5m
Beam: 2.5m
Deadrise: 19 degrees
Rec/max HP: 200
Hull weight: 1100kg
Weight on trailer: 2000kg
CAPACITIES
Fuel: 200lt
ENGINE
Make/model: Mercury
Type: EFI
Rated HP: 150
Displacement: 2507cc
Weight: 193kg
Prop: 19-inch stainless steel Vengeance
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