



A genuine dual-purpose kid-friendly fishing boat

By Roderick Walmsley

It had been almost two years without a boat in the Walmsley family and even though I actually drive a game boat out of the Tweed River I have been yearning to go for a fish on the creeks myself and flick a few lures around. The time had

definitely come to purchase another boat. What boat to get was the question though? My oldest boy, Kevin, has just turned three and loves fishing, with the younger one just over one year old and is already stealing Kevin's fishing rod. So it would have to be something that they could enjoy as well.

Something else to add to the deci-

sion making equation was the fact that where I live on the Southern Gold Coast there is a fair bit of water that is electric only and I would definitely want to fish this with the new boat too. I intended buying a new boat and thus keeping it for a long time; and even possibly passing it on to my oldest boy one day as my dad did with me. This meant a quality built boat that would hopefully stand up to the punishment of a lot of fishing. I was thus looking for a dual purpose estuary and electric boat built like a tank that could be pushed by a reasonably small motor; surely not too much to ask.

I settled on a length of 4.2m simply because I am a rather large bloke and the little bit of extra space would be welcome with 2 little tackers running around. I chose aluminium for its toughness and the fact that I could take it just about anywhere. After looking at several boats on the market I opted for the TABS Bull Shark. I liked the look of the boat and it was definitely built tough and would stand up to a fair bit of punishment while still being quite good on the eye; a boat still needs to look good you know. The purchase was made; the Bull Shark was towed home on a heavy duty Redco Trailer with a cool set of alloys to boot and parked in the garage. The fit out began.

I had run Humminbird sounders on my last two boats and had received faultless performance from all of them so it was a no brainer as to choice of sounder. I mounted one of the new 898 side-imaging/gps combo units on the mini console at the back and a 598 sounder/gps combo on the bow for all my lure casting. For the electric it had to be one of Minn Kota's new I-Pilot motors and I chose the 55lb thrust but added a foot pedal to give me a bit more hands-free options when casting lures. The 55lb thrust model is a 12Volt motor which meant I would only need the 1 battery thus keeping the weight of the boat down somewhat. I already owned a 40lb thrust transom mount Minn Kota electric that I use on my canoe so the electric-only fishing was well and truly catered for.

What to put on the transom was a particularly difficult decision. I would have loved to put a 40HP motor on the back to give it that extra bit of *oomph* but I wouldn't be able to get the motor off for the times that I wanted to head up to the dams and creeks that are electric only. I did my research and one motor kept popping up. The new Yamaha 25HP N series. It is a dual-carburetted 2 stroke motor that seemed to pack the most punch for its power to weight. At around 49kg I would still be able to take it off and place it in a safe place out of the way of my 2 boys' tinkering hands. The motor was mounted on the transom and after connecting the wires cleaning up all the debris from the fit out I stepped back to take a look. She was finally ready to go on her maiden voyage.

The first location for the new TABS was chosen and I removed the motor the night before as a trial exercise. I would be taking Kevin to Clarrie Hall Dam for his first outing on the boat. It is an electric only dam, so once the motor was removed we loaded the boat. The early morning drive was an eventful one with lots of speculation by



The TABS planes easily and looks great on the water!

Kevin as to how big the bass would be that he caught and he has clearly embraced the fisherman's tradition of telling tall tales. In fact, he tells them so well that he tells them even *before* the fishing trip has commenced.

We launched the boat and set off under electric power down the dam. I got around 6km an hour out of the 2 electrics and once we arrived at our chosen fishing location, which was no more than 5 minutes from the boat ramp due to someone on board constantly wanting to fish, we deployed a couple of deep diving minnows and started to troll. The bass

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actually played along and a steady stream of bass kept pouncing on the little minnows. Kevin was thoroughly enjoying himself and so was I. The fishing was probably secondary to me taking note of the small things that I was noticing about the boat's performance. Stability at rest was phenomenal, the height of the gunnels were a perfect height to dissuade Kevin from leaning over the side and the deck space was more than ample to keep the little man entertained as he moved from rod to rod checking that they were properly on the holders and ready to wind any unsuspecting bass in.

The most impressive part of the boat on the day was definitely the I-Pilot Electric up the front. It enabled me to hang the remote around my neck and slight touches from the back of the boat to the troll run enabled me to concentrate my full attention on Kevin. At one stage we had a bit of a cross breeze that was complicating my control of the

electric some what. This was easily overcome by me using the function called auto pilot on the Minn Kota. Due to the fact that the electric has a built in gps it actually follows a gps course to where you tell it to go and is not effected by any outside factors. I could therefore simply aim the boat where I intended going and hit autopilot on the remote until one of the rods buckle over. First test was passed with flying colours.

The next hurdle was to see how the 25hp Yamaha performed. The following weekend had me and a mate towing the boat out to one of the rivers on the Gold Coast to do some lure casting. Once the boat was launched and the car parked I looked at the little motor with a bit of apprehension as I gingerly opened the throttle. The TABS popped up on the plane and scooted along up the river. I was pleasantly surprised and at cruising speed we were doing around 16 to 18 knots with 2 adults sitting at the rear of the boat. The motor is still brand new, so I could only give it a little squirt at full noise and the gps showed a speed of 22knots just prior to me backing the throttle off again. We spent the entire day on the water fishing numerous spots and travelling a fair way. The Yammie used 10 litres of fuel for the day and I was quite impressed with this considering that the little motor is a 2-stroke and brand new. The trip was also a successful one with the boat being christened with its first jack, numerous bream, trevally, flathead, javelin fish and even a few cattiees. It may well be a lucky little boat at that.

It does seem that after a fair bit of looking around and a bit of compromise I have put together a genuine dual-purpose little fishing boat. It is just as at home powering up a river under the power of the main engine as it is sneaking up some skinny little bass water with the electric motor humming away. I look forward to many more years of fun-filled fishing with my two boys out of the new boat.

Good fishing to you all.



There's plenty of storage under the ample deck.



Kevin had a ball in the TABS. It's a very kid-friendly boat!



The Bullshark is a great boat to fish out of and it has plenty of deck room for fishing.

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