

# TABS 440 Razorback - the big boar of boats!

By Dan Bowater  
Mourilyan

TABS aluminium boats need no introduction in North Queensland. Over the last few years the undercurrent of anglers choosing TABS over other bigger brands has meant that I have often found myself fishing in different TABS variations, especially during my time in western towns. Out there, having a versatile rig that can powerfully cover large treks in the Gulf rivers and be towed through hundreds of kilometres of corrugations meant that many anglers favoured a plate style hull over a weaker pressed-aluminium option. In mid September I found myself on the Moresby River (near Mourilyan) with local Tully angler Scott Kampe and his new TABS 440 Razorback. Scott had never fished the Moresby, and you can hardly blame him with Hinchinbrook Channel a short drive south of his home town. Nevertheless, he was very keen on seeing how well his pride and joy would suit targeting the renowned mangrove jack population in the Moresby's middle/upper reaches. Of course I was there on behalf of *Fish and Boat* to look closely at his formidable tinnie...and I somehow was convinced to catch a lure munching jack or two.

## First impressions: the boar of boats

From the first moment I saw the Razorback at the ramp it struck me that this boat has been set up with serious angling in mind. Scott's was the tiller version, meaning it defi-

nately fell into the 'open boat' category (it also comes in side console). In the past I have always liked a tiller steer configuration for that very reason - freedom to move and fish! Powering the Razorback was a 50Hp Yamaha (three cylinder 2-stroke model). The first TABS 440 Razorback was released roughly three years ago and this newer test model (with a balanced rear deck) has only been around for about six months.

Both the weather conditions and tide were far from ideal for our trip. A howling thirty knot south easterly funnelled relentlessly through the harbour entrance and a low tide immediately preceded our launch time. Honestly, I feared we'd be cut short at the first set of sandbars that prevents many larger boats exploring jack country. In the past my barra punt has even found bottom in this precarious bit of water. The alternative, of being 'hogtied' in the tiny section in-between the ramp and entrance, was not great either considering a fair portion is a six knot zone.

## General layout and ride: snouts in the breeze!

It was no use sulking about it - we just had to try! Once entering the dodgy part of the channel, I gave Scott directions to keep us from finding bottom. Considering that the Razorback is a deep-v type tinnie, rather than a punt, I suspected we'd be touching. However, just like a boar sneaking onto the cane at night, we snuck through to safe water. There's less draft than I expected for a deep-v boat. When I took the driver's position, immediately I felt

this would be a safe boat for offshore use. Its sides were higher than a regular tinnie, and that bit of extra dead rise angle really smoothed out the ride. Despite being named after possibly the most despised Aussie feral animal, this boat rocked! The guys at TABS have thought carefully about sports fishermen by creating an electronics mount that could be viewed from the front casting platform and the rear. Not only does this theoretically eliminate the need to purchase two sounders, it gives you the benefit of not needing a conventional space-consuming console.

The Moresby is best described as short and bendy, just like a pig's curly tail (unlike most neighbouring rivers), meaning manoeuvrability becomes important when covering the narrow middle to upper parts. While the Razorback had great speed, it did tend to suddenly tilt on the tighter turns moreso than other TABS boats I have driven, such as the 'Territory' and 'Sportsfish' models. On the upside, the higher sides of the Razorback seemed to make up for this tendency to some degree by providing plenty of freeboard. The chop brewed up by the strong winds was (not surprisingly) simply brushed away and there were no rattling sounds or hull flexing that are trademark irritations in older makes of aluminium boat.

## Hull and performance features - hoofs 'n' hide

Scott mentioned he confidently takes the 440 Razorback to the shipping channel behind Dunk Island (near Mission Beach) where it has accounted for many small marlin, cobia and tuna. That's no porker; this isn't your regular creek tinnie - it has balls! The secret to its suitability in rough conditions isn't just the ten degree dead rise angle, but the inher-

ent weight of the hull (it comes in at 300kg). Put short, it's wall thickness is weighty (plenty of bacon). The sides are comprised of 2.5mm plate and 3mm pressed bottom wall thickness. The keel is marketed as BBQ plate thickness and I couldn't doubt any of it when tearing up that river with snouts high in the breeze. Our Lowrance HDS7 revealed that at wide open throttle the Razorback and 50hp Yammy achieved a top speed of 47.5km/hr, although Scott believed he could get up to 55km/hr in flat conditions. The Razorback planed at 23km/hr and sat comfortably on the plane at 27km/hr. At half throttle it reached 35km/hr which was also Scott's preferred cruising speed. He went on to say that his 50Hp Yamaha 2 stroke consumed one litre per two kilometres on the water at this speed.

## Motor and fuel options: squealing like a pig!

This model featured dual external tanks in contrast with many similar boats favouring 60 litre underfloor

tanks. However, the latter option in other brands is more expensive, reduces freeboard and provides similar capacity anyway. Personally, I like the idea of external tanks, since I can physically see what I've got. Scott said he recently covered an 80km round-trip, including trolling for mackerel, with his two 25L Yamaha tanks - not bad at all! For most anglers, that is going to easily cover the purposes of a 4.4m tinnie. If you planned to roll the dice and take it to the reef, a third tank or jerry can wouldn't be a piggish inclusion (in case of a rough trip home). Considering the above fuel usage is based on the consumption rates of a 2-stroke outboard, it is naturally going to be less in an equivalently powered four stroke. Interestingly though, I thought the 50Hp 2-stroke Yamaha motor felt a prime match for the Razorback. I was a bit surprised to get this feeling, assuming that quality plate boats naturally match well with more sophisticated 4-stroke motors.

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Looking from the transom, it's easy to see the benefits of long side pocket storage on the port side and oodles of uncluttered fishing deck space.



Dan taking the TABS 440 Razorback through its paces. For an open boat, its ride was quite dry, only a rare bit of salt spray would whisk high enough to enter.



The TABS 440 Razorback matched very well with the 50Hp Yamaha 2-stroke motor, providing the benefits of a highly responsive feel and predictably smooth ride.



The TABS 440 Razorback is a very attractive looking boat on the trailer, especially when about to be launched at picturesque Mourilyan Harbour.



From the front casting platform there's plenty to excite the sports fisherman, including a thruster plate and huge underfloor storage capability.