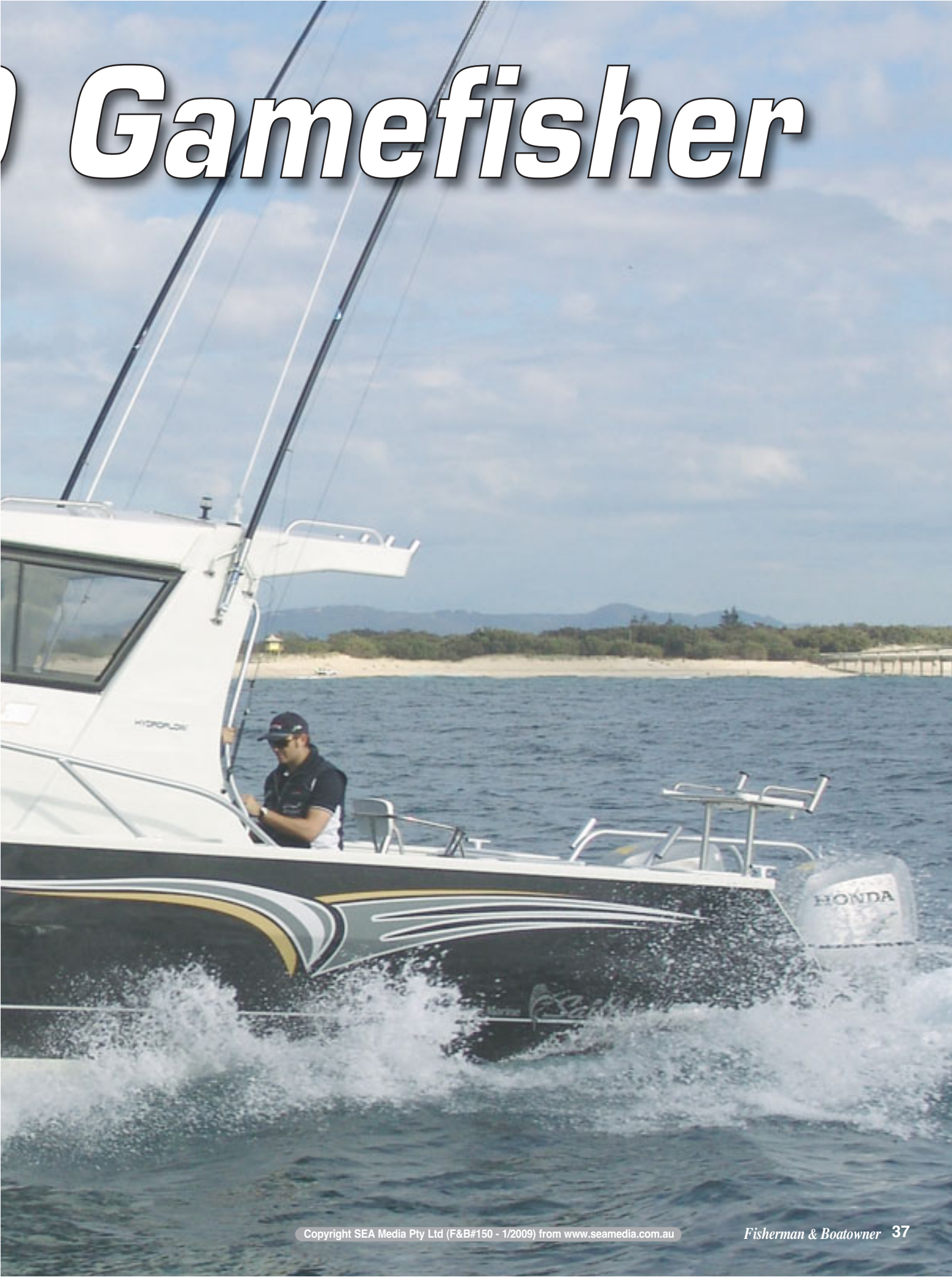


Sailfish 2800

Few powerboats on the Australia market are as well designed, or as well outfitted for offshore fishing as the big Sailfish 2800 Platinum catamaran. This maxi-sized trailerboat (yes, there is a trailerable version, too) is sure to impress serious anglers. Jeff Webster reports, with pics by both PW & JW.



Gamefisher



Sailfish 2800 Gamefisher

Since the early 1990s, I have followed the progress and the success of Sailfish catamarans with some interest. In this industry it is easy enough to start a new boat building concern, but much more difficult to make it successful, and to sustain the operation through good times and bad.

That Sailfish has succeeded in not only surviving, but flourishing since it was established way back in 1993, says a lot about the quality of its products, and the determination and of its founders, Darren and Julie-Anne Forster. This husband and wife team has endured boom and bust times to establish Sailfish Catamarans as the leading brand of alloy powered cats in the country.

During the first few years, Sailfish concentrated on producing just two or three models. These early models were a little rough around the edges. They were built very well, but the finish could have been better. Jump forward fifteen years and the Sailfish range has expanded to eight regular models stretching from 6.2 m to 12.0 m in length - and all are simply beautifully finished.

Over many years, the Sailfish team has honed its manufacturing skills to perfection, to the extent that the build quality, finish and fit-out is vastly superior to nearly all else on offer in the alloy cat market.

The Models

The smallest model in the current Sailfish range is the 6.2 m 2200 Series cuddy cabin. The largest is the 12.0 m 4000 Series Weekender. In between are various fishing and cruising models - including the 2400 and 2800 Platinum Series sport fishing boats.

These two big rigs were displayed by Sailfish's exclusive distributor, Webbe Marine, at the Brisbane Boat Show last October. Soon after, we were able to snaffle the two boats for a test session on the Gold Coast before the boats were transported away to their

new owners.

Winning the toss of a coin, I chose to test the big rig, the 2800 Platinum. Editor PW drew the smaller 2400 Series boat. His full test of the 2400 was printed in the October 2008 issue of F&B and can be viewed online at www.seamedia.com.au.

Design

For a several years Sailfish has been building its big cats with a choice of beam widths to suit different applications. With the 2800 Series, customers have the choice of a 2.44 m, a 2.6 m beam, and a super wide 2.8 m beam. If you intend to keep the boat on

a mooring, or marina berth, then you would obviously opt for the widest beam for the additional interior space and stability of these models. Conversely, a beam of less than 2.5 m is needed if you want to trailer your boat, without restrictions, on Australian roads. Anything wider, and you will require a permit of some sort/and or flags and flashing lights.

Interestingly, the 2800 model offered for testing has the hull bottom width, and therefore the stability of the 2.6 m beam hull, but the topsides and gunwale extrusion have been pulled in or straightened to reduce the maximum beam to the 2.5 m legal towing width.

The only downside to the straight, almost perpendicular topsides is that there is little to deflect spray from rising up the sides of the boat when running into a three quarter headsea. Still, when you've got a hard top and fully enclosed helm station, it matters little if a bit of spray gets thrown about in rough conditions.

Other hull design features of note include the wide, rounded off sponsons, high tunnel, the full and near vertical shape of the stem and forefoot of each sponson, and the small spray chines running the length of the hull.

The Cabin & Helm

With regard to configuration, the standard Sailfish 2800 has a simple cuddy cabin configuration with an open hard top and a huge rear cockpit.

The test boat was fitted with an extended hard top with enclosed toughened glass windscreen and glass sliding side windows to create a separate saloon/helm area. The saloon was open to the cockpit in the test models, but you can have a rear sliding door fitted to enclose the helm area and to separate it from the cockpit.

A variety of other hard top options are also offered so customers can rig their boats to suit their particular requirements.

The forward cabin area is not large for a boat of this length, but there is space for a transverse double berth. The test boat was

SPECIFICATIONS

Name	Sailfish
Model	2800 Platinum
Configuration	Cuddy cabin
Length overall	8.4 m
Hull length	7.7 m
Maximum beam	2.5 m
Draft	600 mm
Bottom alloy	5.0 mm
Topsides alloy	3.0 mm
Hull weight	1,500 kg
Towing weight	2,900 - 3,300 kg
Length on trailer	9.3 m
Height on trailer	3.6 m
Maximum power	2 x 175 hp
Maximum engine weight	300 kg
Power as tested	2 x Honda 150 hp
Std.fuel capacity	2 x 180 L
Maximum speed	38.3 knots
Price: As Tested,	\$198,503 + Freight

PERFORMANCE

R/Min	Speed
1,000 rpm	4.2 knots
1,500 rpm	5.4 knots
2,000 rpm	7.7 knots
2,500 rpm	10.7 knots
3,000 rpm	15.2 knots
3,500 rpm	20.4 knots
4,000 rpm	24.8 knots
4,500 rpm	29.0 knots
5,000 rpm	33.1 knots
5,500 rpm	35.9 knots
6,000 rpm	38.3 knots



fitted with optional berth cushions to create a berth about 2.15 m long by 1.16 m wide. Under the port side berth, built deep into the port side sponson is a toilet and shower system. The sponson is so deep here that you can stand in this recess and have a shower (or a pee) with near full headroom.

The deluxe toilet and shower set up (complete with electric toilet, shower screen, underfloor bilge sump, 65L water tank, etc) is an option that I would choose for this boat, but there are a number of other toilet/shower options - including the fitment of a simple Porta Pottie system.

Some of the other creature comforts fitted to the test boat included a freshwater sink unit and a 85L S/S refrigerator - both located behind the helm chair. Opposite is an icebox underneath a rear facing cushion seat.

Options not fitted, but which may be desirable include a galley unit, larger fridge, external step down shower, and more. In truth there are too many options to list - so you are best to check the Webbe Marine website for the full specifications.

The standard seating in the Sailfish 2800 has been kept to a minimum - as you would expect in a boat designed for sport fishing. The deluxe bucket helm and forward passenger chairs are mounted above storage boxes and both



have a padded, aft facing seat. The boxes are situated within the saloon area, which is elevated a step above the height of the rear cockpit floor.

Other helm and saloon area features include a very large instrument panel, a wide, flat dash area to port, a lowset but comfortable to use steering wheel and throttle mounting, plenty of dash rails, a lockable cabin door, and built in

tackle storage drawers.

The hard top also has provision for mounting radios overhead, flush fitted into the hardtop bulkhead. In summary, I have to say that the layout and designed of the helm area works exceptionally well. Everything is neat and tidy, well placed, yet easy to view and use. The finish is also excellent; all the alloy welds are tidy and neat, and

the paintwork is first class.

Fishing Features

You would be hard pressed to find a better cockpit fishing layout than that on the Sailfish 2800. It really is superb. Okay, it does have a couple of line chopping outboard propellers on each corner of the transom, but within the constraints of the powered cat design, the cockpit layout in the Sailfish is without peer.

To start with the cockpit is very long and wide - so big in fact that the optional centre mounted fish/storage box and Reelax game chair doesn't get in the way at all. Four or five blokes can fish this boat with ease - and it has the lateral stability and stern buoyancy to cope with five heavy blokes rushing aft, or over to one side to land a fish.

If you have a close look at the cockpit photos of this boat you will notice many other well designed, well thought out features. Some of them include the above floor, 2.34 m long side pockets (with horizontal rod storage), the wide side decks with built in rod holders and inboard mounted coaming rails, the padded coamings, the enclosed battery lockers, the walk thru transom, the pull-out deck wash, the optional port side bait board, the hard top mounted rocket launcher, and the cabin side mounted Reelax outriggers.

If that's not enough, the Sailfish also has two large live bait tanks flush fitted into the transom corners. In the test boat, both tanks were plumbed and ready to be loaded up with baitfish.

Construction & Safety.

All Sailfish cats can be built in Survey, and there is not a lot of difference between the Survey boats and the recreational boats - so you can rely on the construction of these craft. The hull and transom of the 2800 is made from 5.0 mm plate alloy, while 3.0 mm plate is used for the topsides. A tough, 25 mm solid keel runs the length of each sponson.

Underfloor a welded box section stringer grid adds stiffness to the hull. Block foam is then added to the open spaces between stringers to add greater rigidity, to quieten the hull underway, and to provide positive buoyancy. The inclusion of foam floatation, in combination with the self draining cockpit, and multiple bilge pumps makes the Sailfish 2800 cat a very safe



craft - ideal for fishing long distances offshore.

Performance

The Sailfish 2800 is rated for a maximum of 2 x 175 hp extra longshaft outboards, but it achieves adequate performance with twin 130 - 140 hp engines. Best power is probably twin 150s - as fitted to the test boat.

The two 150 hp Honda VTEC 4-strokes on the test rig were excellent in both performance and economy. These ultra smooth, in-line 4 cylinder, 2,354 cc outboards provided the Sailfish with a decent kick in acceleration off the mark and a high 38 knot top speed.

At low speeds, the Hondas were even better, running quietly and ever so smoothly. For extended periods of low speed trolling, I doubt you could find a better engine.



Feeding the twin Hondas was a pair of 180L underfloor fuel tanks. This may be enough for middle distance day trips offshore, but I suspect many customers will want to option the boat with the bigger 200 or 220L fuel tanks.

As most readers are aware, F&B has twin 150 Hondas on our big deep-vee project boat, the Salty 27, Far-Away. Using the comprehensive long term

fuel data from that project, we can extrapolate the figures accurately, to confirm these Hondas will run, with the standard 2 x 180 litre tanks (less 5% line losses)

4-5 l/ph @ 2,000 r/min for 7-8kn = approx 260-270 nm range.

17-18 l/ph @ 3,500 r/min for 20.4kn = approx 205-215nm range

22-23 l/ph @ 4,000 r/min for 24.8kn = approx 165-175 nm range

25-26 l/ph @ 4,500 r/min for 29.0kn = approx 195-205 nm range

Handling & Ride

On the water the Sailfish 2800 is a big, solid, stable platform, both at rest and underway. The boat makes short work of inshore and bay chop, and the long, 7.7 m waterline length enables it to straddle most offshore waves in calm through to medium sea conditions.

Our offshore test of the 2800 was conducted with a mild offshore swell topped by a 10 - 15 knot breeze - pretty calm conditions really, but there was enough of a sea to judge that the big cat will be able to comfortably deal with some pretty severe seas.

Like most cats, the 2800 likes to run a few points off head-on so that each wave is tackled by one sponson at a time. Running in this manner, the boat is very soft and enjoyable to drive. The boat can obviously turn and run straight into the sea, but you will get some hull patter and noise - more so in choppy conditions. This is not a criticism of the Sailfish, but a characteristic of the vast majority of powered catamarans.

In a following sea, the Sailfish tracked straight and true, though I would have liked to be able to trim the bow out further than I could. When the boat is running quickly, the thrust of the big Hondas trims the Sailfish up nicely, but at slower, more comfortable offshore speeds I felt the boat would have run better with a slightly more bow up attitude.

On the plus side, the natural level running attitude of the Sailfish enables it to rise on to the plane at a low speed, and with no discernible planing hump. In rough seas this ability to run slowly while maintaining a full planing attitude will save fuel (and aggravation) because the skipper won't have to keep working the throttles to maintain a decent speed across the ground.

Another benefit of the Sailfish, compared with many other cats, is the way the boat holds its bow up when trolling at low speeds. In the Sailfish, there is enough buoyancy in the sponsons forward to lift the bow well clear of the waves. This keeps the boat drier and reduces tunnel slap.

On The Highway

It might only have a beam of 2.5 m, but standing on the trailer the first thing you notice about the 2800 Series Sailfish is its size. It is simply huge, standing 3.6 m off the ground, and with an overall length (including the alloy trailer) of 9.3 m. Yes, it is one very large trailerboat, and one that requires an equally large and powerful tow vehicle.

With regard to weight, the trailer package is not as heavy as you might expect - thanks largely to the custom made aluminium Sailfish tri-axle trailer. Depending on engines and options, the full BMT package weighs between 2.9 and 3.3 tonnes.

The trailer has AL-KO suspension axles, a full Hydrastar hydraulic break-away disc braking system, along with LED waterproof lights.

Conclusion

\$160 - \$200k (depending on options) is a lot of money to pay for a trailerboat, but then the big Sailfish 2800 is a heck of a lot of boat. If you are looking for the ultimate offshore sport fishing trailerboat, the Sailfish 2800 Platinum should be on your short list. It is beautifully finished, superbly constructed, safe and seaworthy. You can run this boat wide offshore safe in the knowledge that it will be able to cope with some rough weather.

But for me, the best feature of the Sailfish 2800 is the layout. The fully enclosed hard top, the beautifully arrayed helm area - and that massive rear cockpit are ideal for offshore sport fishing. Top that off with all the right accessories - from live bait tanks to outriggers, and the Sailfish 2800 is one exceptionable fishing boat.

As tested, with the twin 150 hp Hondas, tri-axle aluminium Sailfish trailer and options, the Sailfish 2800 Platinum is priced at \$198,503 plus freight. For full details and individual pricing, contact Webbe Marine, 27 Marshall Road, Kirrawee NSW 2232. Phone (02) 9521 7944.

F&B