

## TRAILERBOAT TRIALS

By Sam Mossman

NEW ZEALAND  
**fishing**  
news

# Bluefin 600 Fisho



**Sportcraft Boats is a family firm with yards in Morrinsville and Mount Maunganui.**

The company is best known for developing the successful Scorpion marque, with aluminium hulls constructed under contract and fitted out by Sportcraft.

Some years ago, the rights to the name 'Bluefin' were purchased and a new range of hulls designed.

The latest iteration is the Bluefin 600 Fisho, a six-metre hull designed to get fishermen and divers out and back safely at a price most could afford. In early March I drove down to Tauranga to trial one of these hulls with Jamie Black of Sportcraft Boats.

### Construction

The hull bottoms are 5mm aluminium, the sides 3mm, and the

topside a mix of 4mm (deck) and 3mm. The hull is supported by six full-length bearers plus a keel bar. Laterally there are three full bulkheads (including the transom) and 13 gussets. The hull design incorporates a medium entry running to a 17° deadrise at the transom. No planing strakes are necessary, and this helps give a softer ride. Wide, flat chines at the stern taper out at the shoulders. Chines and keel are formed by seam-welding the plates into aluminium extrusions. The bottom plates extend a little past the transom wall, effectively forming modest 'flopper-stopper' plates that aid stability at rest, as well as increasing the planing surface.

Buoyancy is provided by a single, large, under-floor buoyancy tank that's sealed and pressure-tested,

providing about 950kg of reserve buoyancy. The welding appears robust and well executed.

The 600 Fisho is designed as an entry-level craft that will get you out on the water, and as a no-frills hull, the basic fit-out is kept to the bare necessities, making this rig probably the most affordable on the market.

### Power and performance

The 600 is rated for outboards up to 115hp. The test rig was fitted with a standard three-cylinder, 90hp Mercury two-stroke with a stainless Laser II 20"-pitch prop.

A quick squirt on the harbour saw it produce 63.6kph (34.5 knots) at 5400rpm, according to my Magellan handheld GPS. Maximum 'book' revs for this engine are 5500rpm, so the prop match and performance

look pretty good.

Fuel is carried in two tote tanks that fit under the transom, with retaining lips to hold them in place.

At 17°, this is not a deep-V hull, and trades a bit of ride against increased stability. A wind-against-tide situation at the Tauranga Harbour entrance can always be depended on to lift some steep standing waves, as can the high-current area outside, especially in the shallows to the west. It was pretty sloppy, with up to a metre of sea encountered. With its minimalist layout keeping the weight down, the 600 might be characterised as a lively hull, but not a harsh rider. It holds well on plane at relatively low speeds, and with just Jamie and me aboard, we could pick our way through the sea in comfort at about 14 knots. The high sides and the turn-back at the top of the 'screen kept us dry.

### Anchoring

In keeping with the 'back to basics' theme of this rig, no anchor winch had been fitted, but a large side-opening hatch and an internal chequerplate bow platform make life fairly easy for the anchorman. The high foredeck is easy to duck under.

A short bowsprit/fairlead opens into a decent-sized, open topped, drained anchor-well with crucifix bollard fitted.

For deep-water work, a sliding float is a cheap and easy alternative to a winch for lifting the pick.



A large forward hatch gives comfortable access to work the anchor.



Grab rails, ladder and boarding platform aid divers.



### Layout

This is a day-boat layout, with an open forecabin and no berths. Jamie suggests throwing a bean-bag up into the bow if you think the kids might want a nap. This allows a forward helm position, opening up a lot of extra cockpit space for fishing and diving activities. The big cockpit is one of the main features of this hull.

The chequerplate deck runs right through to the bow and a pipe footrest, which runs across the boat just in front of the helm seats, also serves to hold items stored there from sliding back when the boat is underway.

The console back is enclosed with a screw-on plate to protect the wiring and steering. The front panel features basic engine gauges and switching. Steering is cable and quite adequate for the job. The dash tray has a full-width grab rail that doubles as a retainer for items stowed there. A moderate-sized sounder and GPS could be mounted on the dash or recessed into the console face.

The 'screen is lightly-tinted polycarbonate in an alloy frame. The swivelling helm seats are upholstered plastic buckets with fold-down backs, and are mounted on fibreglass pedestals with internal stowage space.

The sealed chequerplate deck drains to a central sump, in turn drained by an 1100gph bilge pump. The battery is inside a protective box strapped to a raised battery stand, and is fitted with an isolation switch.

(An alternative I favour is to site the battery up on the full-width shelf under the transom, where it would have even better protection from swamping.)

Side shelves about three metres long run the length of the cockpit, and there are smaller pockets at each side of the helm position for odds and ends.

Nav lights are fitted to the cuddy sides, and a riding light/stern light is of the stick-mounted variety, plugging into a mount in the transom top.

Over the transom wall are two chequerplate boarding platforms with grab rails and a fold-down 'H' ladder. A mounting bracket for a transducer is fitted on the stern.

### Fishability

With its 17° deadrise and 'flopper stopper' extensions under the stern platforms, this is a relatively stable hull. The Chequerplate deck provides good footing, although it doesn't extend right to the sides (where there is a smooth strip). There is toe room right around, and smooth gunwale faces with rounded corners that provide top-of-the-thigh support.

Four nylon through-gunwale rod holders are fitted along the sides, while two vertical ones in the centre transom are obviously designed to mount a bait-board. There is plenty of room for more rod holders if required.

Catch stowage duties are taken care of with an after-market ice bin,

as most anglers prefer these days. The top of the substantial engine pod is open, and it would not take a lot of work to make this into a workable live-bait tank.

Divers have the facility of ladder and boarding platform. Although many divers prefer the 'I' ladder to the 'H' ladder design used (as it is easier to use with fins on), this is not a biggie. The side shelves look like they might be wide enough to take dive bottles, but otherwise a tank rack could be installed.

As tested, this hull is a blank canvas, but has the basics required to make a decent fish and dive

machine, and can be fitted out as the owner's requirements and finances dictate. But sometimes the Spartan approach works, too. The test run was a bare bones affair; we took two life jackets, cell phones and my waterproof hand-held VHF. We had a couple of rods, some soft-baits and an ice box too, and using a GPS app on Jamie's i-phone, did a drift over a bank off Matakana Island, where we managed a couple of pannie snapper for dinner. Shame i-phones don't have a sounder app, too, but it's probably just a matter of time before you can buy a plug-in transducer for them!





Helm seats are upholstered plastic-bucket type with fold-down backs.



The forward helm position allows a big, open cockpit.



A no-frills fit out is part of the concept: to get you on the water safely at the best possible price.

### Trailer

Sportcraft boats like the Bluefin 600 are carried on trailers made by Sportline, an allied company. This was a single axle, cradle A-frame design, with four pairs of wobble rollers per side and zinc-protected leaf-spring suspension.


The wheel guards are plastic with non-slip moulding as an aid to boarding while on the trailer, although they felt a bit light for big blokes like me to be mounting on a regular basis.

The trailer looked well protected, with frame, wheel rims, nuts and bolts all galvanised.

Other features included submersible LED trailer lights, a wind-down jockey wheel, and dual-ratio manual winch. Trailerable weight for the rig is a modest 860kg, making for an easy tow and launch.

### All in all

You get what you pay for in this world, and the Bluefin 600 Fisho represents good value for money.

There are not many, if any, other six-metre rigs you can get on the water for \$33,500. It may be a no-frills rig, but it has a lot of cockpit space, handles the sea fine, and looks to be well built. In these financially-constrained times, this is a boat that will get you, your family and mates into the fishing. 

### Specifications

Material:	Aluminium
Configuration:	runabout
LOA:	6.02m
Beam:	2.3m
Bottoms:	5mm
Sides:	3mm
Deadrise:	17°
Max HP:	115hp
Engine:	Mercury 90hp two stroke
Prop:	Laser II 20" pitch
Trailer:	Sportline single axle
Tow weight:	860kg
As tested:	\$33,500
Test boat courtesy of Sportcraft Boats.	



The chequerplate deck drains to a sump under the battery stand.



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A platform is fitted in the bow as an aid to pulling the pick.