

FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

BOAT TEST: BLUEFIN 525 FISHERMAN

At a fleeting glance the 525 Fisherman may look just like the 600 Fisherman.... but it's not!

The Bluefin 525 Fisherman is effectively a scaled down version of the popular 600 Fisherman, but in a more compact and less expensive package. Barry Thompson checks out the newest addition to the ever growing Bluefin range.

He adds that when they designed the new boat it had to perform well with a Mercury or Honda 60hp and ride as well as

the bigger 600 Fisherman.

"We changed the 17 degree deadrise hull considerably by adding wider chines

due to the shorter length and took a lot of the forefoot out of the bow. This removed excess forward buoyancy and allows the 535 to be more stable at rest, while in no way adversely affecting the hull's ability to handle a moderate sea", he says.

One thing I noticed was just how 'slippery' the 525 Fisherman was onto the plane and the fact that it retained the planing attitude even at very low rpm. We had flat calm, glassy smooth water for the test and apart from a low swell off the Mount never really got to give the boat a testing run. The construction is solid and with a 5mm bottom there's a feeling of stiffness about the boat, plus there's no 'tinnie' noise when underway.

Second Take

At a fleeting glance the 525 Fisherman may look just like the 600 Fisherman.... but it's not! The basic difference is size and volume, with the 525 losing some of the length of the cabin and the cockpit, plus the cabin top and screen are modified to suit the dimensions of the smaller hull.

The 525 Fisherman, just like the 600 Fisherman, is really a bit of an all-rounder, but more targeted at those who want a bare and robust fishing tinny. It's the type of boat that you can easily take a few blokes out in, and you can be at your favourite fishing spot fishing comfortably; throw in some dive gear and a couple of bottles, and you can dive, too. Add some extra seating aft, and you've got a good family boat too, with plenty of storage for'ard in the cuddy cabin.

The 525 has an open layout with an adequately sized boarding platform on each side of the outboard pod, with the port corner featuring an aluminium boarding ladder. For divers and swimmers, a grab rail has also been welded onto the rear of the transom to aid in re-entering the boat.

Our test boat came with two tote tanks, which rest on the floor, a small piece of aluminium extrusion on either side stops them sliding forward into the cockpit. While you can't have an underfloor fuel tank as that



The things that really impress me when I look at the Bluefin and also the Scorpion range, which are both made by Sportcraft Boats, is not only the quality finish but also the exceptional value for money. What you get in the total package is very impressive.

Certainly, being a manufacturer and retailer helps as there is no middle margin to consider, something that in the case of the Bluefin and Scorpion boats is passed onto the client. Jamie Black of Sportcraft Boats Mt Maunganui makes no pretence about marketing his boats as value packages and points out that a client can always up-spec. and add what they want. It just depends on how much they want to spend.

"The main reason behind developing the 525 Fisherman was we had clients who liked the 600 Fisherman but wanted something smaller, lighter and could be powered by a lesser horsepower engine", says Jamie.

Twin forward seats are standard, but there are options.

Just need some softbiat rods now!





The bow section has been fine tuned with a stepper entry.



The cockpit is open and very workable for 3-4 fishermen.

area is used for positive buoyancy, a stern tank can be fitted as an option.
The transom also has a shelf built into it and the battery sits below, but housed up off the floor in its own compartment. Below that rests the bilge pump.

Sizeable Cockpit

Even though the cockpit has been decreased in size from the 600 Fisherman it's still quite sizeable, with long side shelves running right up to the forward seating area.

Two rod holders each side are situated along the coamings.

Seating consists of two basic single seats, with fibreglass moulded storage space underneath. Should you want a different seating configuration, a king/queen style arrangement can also be fitted – a better option if you're looking at a more child-friendly layout. A removable bin seat is also a good option and can double as a fish bin.

Additional small storage shelves are on either side of the helm, a great place for keys

and cell phones. A handrail runs right along the edge of the forward dash area, and is great for passengers to grab onto – especially if things get rough.

Forward in the well-protected cuddy cabin, there is plentiful storage space available in the cabin sides, in the form of two large side shelves. No bunks here, as the primary design focus of the 525 Fisherman is to maximise the cockpit space at the compromise of some cabin area.

Above, a large aluminium deck hatch provides good access to the anchor locker, so that the anchoring chores can be done by hand.

At the helm, the skipper is protected by a three-piece acrylic windshield and a bimini top provides protection from above. The configuration gives most users enough standing headroom to drive, and drive seated should they wish.

The dash is made up from raw aluminium (remember we're budget boating here) but nonetheless it's still tidy. Our test boat had the engine instruments already mounted, but upon ordering you could specify to have your fishfinder mounted here, with the engine instruments alongside.

The 525 Fisherman was powered with a Mercury 60hp FourStroke EFI BigFoot. Top speed was 31mph. So what is a BigFoot and how does it differ from a standard engine? BigFoot engines are built with a

Plenty of space under the aft deck for a couple of tote tanks.



The open anchor locker can be fitted with an auto winch.



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larger, heavier-duty gear case, larger gears and shafts (up to 33% larger than standard outboards) and a larger propeller. The BigFoot's propeller has up to 20 per cent more surface area than a standard outboard propeller, providing more working surface for greater overall thrust, acceleration and manoeuvrability. On a heavy boat, which a standard outboard may have trouble getting up onto the plane, the BigFoot's larger propeller can dramatically improve performance – at the cost, of course, of a little bit of top-end speed.

The boat is rated to 90hp, which is something you would perhaps consider if you plan to do a lot of your boating with 3-4 divers or fishos. However I was impressed by the 'grunt' of the BigFoot, which really gives great bite from low idle and helps maintain the rpm at the top end. We ran a 13" pitch three-blade alloy propeller and you could feel the boat would have no problem handling plenty of extra weight.

Back on the trailer and the Bluefin 525 Fisherman sits on a single-axle trailer. The rig has a trailerable weight of around 820kg and without a canopy it stands 2.3m tall so is going to fit under most carports. It can be dropped to fit under a standard garage door of 2.1m height.

Overall, it's a great package to get you out on the water. •AB

The 60hp Mercury 60 EFI is a great match.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model:	Bluefin 525 Fisherman
Priced from:	\$30,500
Price as tested:	\$33,000
Type:	Cuddy Cabin
Construction:	Aluminium
LOA:	5.25m
Beam:	2.30m
Deadrise:	17 degrees
Trailer Make:	Sportline
Height on trailer:	2.3m
Trailerable weight:	820kg
Engine capacity:	60hp-90hp
Engine:	Mercury 60 EFI BigFoot
Propeller:	13" P 3-blade alloy
Power options:	Outboard
Fuel capacity:	Tote tanks

Notable features:
Acrylic windscreen,
Anchor locker,
Battery box and switch,
Bilge pump,
Boarding ladder and
platforms,
Fully welded chequerplate
sole,
Navigation lights,
Wiring loom.

Notable Options on Test Boat
Humminbird sounder

Performance

Rpm	Mph
1500	7.5
2000	8.5
2500	10.0
3000	12.5
3500	15.5
4000	17.5
4500	23.0
5000	26.0
5500	28.0
6000	31.0

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