

The family that plays together stays together, and that motto definitely rings true at Sportcraft Boats. The business was founded in 1987 by former New Zealand Offshore title winner Spencer Black, who designed and built his first boat some 60 years ago, at an age when most young men are more interested in other pursuits. Spencer has a wealth of experience, which only time on the water can buy, and he can still be found for a yarn at the company's Morrinsville branch.

Spencer's son and managing director, Jamie, oversees the Mt Maunganui branch and deems himself very fortunate to have grown up in a boating family. While the marine industry has seen more than its fair share of hard times over the last couple of years, Jamie still enjoys the fact that Sportcraft allows other families the chance to enjoy the boating lifestyle through the company's focus on affordable and usable designs.

Sportcraft Boats was initially a boat dealership, selling another well-known brand of aluminium boat until supply became an issue. This prompted a move into manufacturing, starting with the Sportcraft-designed Scorpion brand and later the purchase of the Bluefin range, which the company has now almost completely redesigned, based on customer feedback and personal on-the-water experience—the Black family are keen fishermen, water skiers and divers themselves so they know what works and what doesn't.

"It's one thing to design boats, but you've still got to put them in the water and see how they go," adds Jamie.

Happy wife, happy life

While most blokes are quite content to relieve themselves over the side for all to see, this doesn't wash so well with the ladies – neither do foul odours while trying to sleep.

Jamie explains the inspiration behind the design: "The 769 Weekender evolved out of our existing Bluefin 769 design. My wife didn't want to sleep over the toilet so when we'd go out, she would take the chemical toilet out of the front and put it out the back at night. That got us thinking that we should design a boat with a separate toilet and shower, without sacrificing too much space."

To keep the wife really happy, Sportcraft has also included a sink, gas cooker and hot and cold running water.

"It works really well, as you can keep the cabin as your living area and the cockpit for fishing and making a mess," explains Jamie. The separate toilet/shower cubicle features a sliding window to allow fresh air in and steam

out. In keeping with the design brief, space is fairly tight and, at six-foot one, I had just enough knee space to sit with the door closed, although an internal handle would be useful. Our test boat only had a 40-litre fresh water tank fitted, but Sportcraft Boats will be including 100-litre underfloor tanks, at least, on all future 769 Weekenders.

The gas callfont (featuring adjustable temperature) is neatly hidden within a compartment in the cockpit to allow easy access when needed.

For the blokes

There's quite a bit of space for the blokes to make as much mess as they want in pursuit of a dinner, with almost 4m² of cockpit space. The floor is easy-to-clean tread plate and, with the addition of a salt water pump or even a good old-fashioned bucket and brush, it won't take long to clean up, keeping the ladies happy. A canvas bimini top slides out to cover around two-thirds of the cockpit area, while still allowing plenty of casting space at the back. It retracts into the roof recess when not required, allowing for storage of up to five rods in the rocket launcher above.

A rod rack can be included in the shower, which would double as a washdown, but check with the wife first before optioning in that feature. Storage for the rest of the arsenal can be found in the lengthy parcel shelves which are nicely lined, and a rear-facing spotlight provides options for night fishing or entertaining.

The separate toilet/shower cubicle doesn't use up too much of the available space

Lite's made easier with the automatic anchor

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