

Sportcraft's Bluefin 620 Hardtop

Sportcraft Boats originally dealt in existing brands, but later developed their own aluminium designs, with hulls constructed under contract and fitted out by them.

They established the successful Scorpion brand in their Morrinsville and Mount Maunganui yards, and then a range of pontoon hulls. The rights to the name 'Bluefin' were purchased and a new range of hulls designed, including the subject of this test, the 620 HT, a six-metre class hardtop.

The Bluefin range sells very well, and to facilitate faster production times, no customising of basic construction is offered, although a range of fit-out options are available to suit the customer.

On a bright morning in early March I drove to Mount Maunganui to rendezvous with Jamie Black of Sportcraft Boats and take a Bluefin 620 HT out on the water.

Construction

The hull bottoms are 5mm aluminium, the sides 3mm and the topsides a mix of 4mm and 3mm. The hull is supported by six full-length bearers and a keel bar. Laterally there are three full bulkheads (including the transom) and 13 frames. The hull design incorporates a medium entry running to a 17° dead-rise 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.

Buoyancy is provided by a single, large, sealed under-floor buoyancy tank giving about 100kg of reserve buoyancy. The buoyancy chamber is pressure tested.

Fuel for the test boat is provided by two tote tanks, but an optional 90-litre aluminium tank is offered that bolts under the transom shelf, up off the deck to allow easy cleaning and washout.

Power and performance

The Bluefin 620 package is powered by a Mercury 115hp Optimax, a direct-injection two-stroke outboard, turning an 18-inch-pitch Vengeance prop. This is a surprisingly upmarket power plant to find on such a modestly-priced rig; often cheaper, carburetted two-strokes are used to help keep the price of the package down.

Pleasant surprise number two was how well the boat handled. A ten-knot wind was opposing the swift run-out tide at the Tauranga entrance, creating a tight half-metre chop. Outside was an easy open swell of about a metre. The Bluefin 620 accelerated quickly off the mark and proved to be a soft rider in the chop, cutting through the sea smoothly and generally handling well. The cable steering was adequate and hydraulics can be fitted as an option.

Visibility was good from the helm – both seated and standing – through the 7mm toughened-glass forward windows,

polycarbonate sides and, of course, the hard-top's open-back. The windows are lapped to the outside of the hard-top, a much stronger assembly method than rubber-seal mounts.

A quick squirt on the throttle produced a maximum of 40mph (64.4km/h or around 35 knots) at 5400rpm – pretty much squarely in the middle of the 'book' maximum range of 5000-5750rpm and perfectly adequate for a fish-and-dive boat. This engine size is a good match to the hull, and the rig is well set up, with a good range of tilt and trim and no cavitation problems in the normal trim range.

The single battery, in a protective case with an isolation switch, is strapped down on the open transom shelf well above deck level.

Anchoring

While it is possible to get to the bow by walking around the sides (after-market non-skid panels could easily be added to aid this), it is much easier



to work the anchor by standing in the hatchway set in the fore-cabin roof. From here it is an easy reach to the fairlead set on a short bowsprit. A deep (unhatched) anchor well is set between the fairlead and the hatchway, with a substantial alloy bollard welded to the rear of the fairlead.

The one-piece bow rail is high, although two uprights slightly restrict the width of an anchor that can be passed under it. A bow rail, split at the fairlead, would be a good alternative, allowing anchors of any size to be easily used, while also constraining the warp in the fairlead if the boat is bucking in a head sea while at anchor. An electric anchor winch is offered and is a popular accessory.

A simple and ergonomically easy-to-use anchoring set-up.

Layout

The forecabin is lined down to the deck. There is stowage space under the berths and in wide side-shelves along the cabin walls. A berth infill is an option, and with this in place the cabin can accommodate two adults (and a kid at a pinch). Access to the back of the steering console is via a screw-off plate, and a cabin light is fitted.

Out at the helm, the big dash is lined with marine carpet that cuts internal glare on the forward windows and stops gear sliding around.

The dash is separated into three trays, with two more narrow ones along the sidewalls. A large, hatched, glovebox-type locker is set in front of the passenger for additional stowage.

The helm console has flush-mounted Mercury Smartcraft gauges and switches. The package comes with a basic-level Navman Fish 4430 sounder. A GME GX800 VHF is set overhead, and is also part of the key-turn package deal. Seats, in this case, were the optional king-and-queen units, with a swivelling forward seat, a bench behind, and internal stowage. Pipe pedestal seats are standard and other seating options are available. Pipe foot rests are fitted, and other items include an overhead cabin light and grab rails on the trailing edges of the hardtop.

The sealed chequer-plate deck drains back to a sump under the transom, from where water is removed by an 1100gph Rule bilge pump. Side pockets run the full length of the cockpit, and a wide shelf runs across the stern under the transom top. Stern grab-rails double as tie-off points, and over the transom are



Basic instrumentation, switching and a sounder are flush-mounted at the helm; a VHF is set overhead.

two chequer-plate boarding platforms, with the passenger-side platform featuring a fold-down boarding ladder. This is a wide ladder, and the steering gear needs to be on the opposite lock to get it up and down. The ladder could afford to be narrower to avoid this, without affecting its function.

Overall, a good use of space provides a decent amount of working room in the cockpit and plenty of stowage options.

Fishability

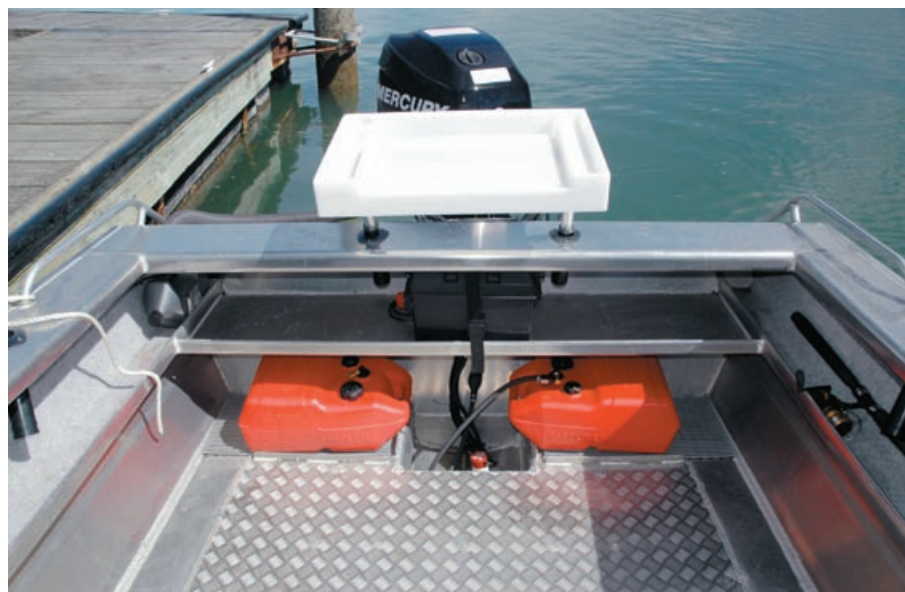
There is good mid-thigh support for anglers along the sides and transom, and although you have to lean slightly forward to get support from the gunwales, you are not much off balance. The chequerplate decking ends a little short of the sides where it intersects the rising bottom shape. In practice this didn't seem too much of a problem, as the angler's heels are still on the non-

slip chequer-plate section when facing square and leaning on the gunwales. Again, if this was found to be slippery in a fishing situation, aftermarket anti-skid material could be added.

The hull was reasonably stable, with only a modest list induced by two adults on one gunwale in a beam sea. Like all boats, there is a fine line between having enough deadrise to get a good ride, but not so much that the hull becomes



The easiest access to the anchor is through the hatch in the foredeck.



Above left: Rear-facing bench seats are good to fish from. Above right: Tote tanks fit under the transom (an optional 90-litre tank can be bolted to the bottom of the transom shelf). Left: The platform on the passenger side has a boarding ladder and grab rails.

unstable at rest. The 620 seems to walk the line well with its 17° hull.

Fishing fittings include four through-gunwale nylon rod holders (two each side), plus another two in the transom, which are there to mount the bait board. A five-position rocket launcher is built into the hardtop, and a cockpit spotlight is also mounted there.

The rod holders, by their angles and nylon construction, are set up for bottom fishing. What else might a fisherman need? An icebox to store the bait and catch, and maybe a livebait tank. Both items can be taken care of with the excellent after-market models available; the livie tank

could be a removable model out on the boarding platform.

This is a good basic fish-and-dive boat that could be set up for blue-water work without too much trouble, using drop-in outriggers and metal rod holders.

Trailer

The test boat was carried on a Sportline Cradle A-Frame trailer, with a single axle and zinc-protected leaf-spring suspension. Guards are moulded plastic and wheel rims are galvanised. The hull is supported by six pairs of wobble rollers per side; other fittings include a dual-ratio manual winch, submersible lights and a wind-down jock-

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Left: The optional king-and-queen seats have internal storage space.

ey wheel. Rig tow weight is approximately 1160kg.

All in all

The only extras over the basic package on the test boat were the paint and the optional king-and-queen seats. This is a good, entry-level fish-and-dive rig at an excellent price. You get what you pay for in this world, but a well-behaved 6.2m hard top with a direct-injection outboard for \$45,500 is a good deal, especially with sounder, radio, bait-board, linings and upholstery and ground tackle included.



Specifications

Material	Aluminium
Design	Open-back hard top
LOA	6.2m
Beam	2.5m
Bottoms	5mm
Sides	3mm
Deadrise	17°
Max HP	125hp
Engine	Mercury 115hp Optimax
Trailer	Sportline
Tow weight	1160kg
Key Turn Package	\$45,500
As tested	\$50,500
Test boat courtesy of Sportcraft Boats.	

BLUEFIN 620 HARDTOP

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