

# Big Bluey

Two years ago we tested the Bluefin 720L; now we test the newer version and what is also another option added to that model range, the 720 Lock-up Weekender. Back then, the conditions were perfect for boating, with a flat calm Auckland harbour; now, with almost the exact same weather, we look at the new model version. Freddy Foote reports.



*The Bluefin 720 Lock-up Weekender running on a calm Auckland harbour.*

**B**luefin is a brand of Sportcraft Boats Ltd. Sportcraft Boats is essentially a manufacturer/dealer, manufacturing and distributing Bluefin boats alongside sister brand Scorpion.

The Bluefin brand has enjoyed much success in the last decade, slowly building a strong presence in the market, gaining

market share where other brands have fallen or moved into other markets.

A good reputation amongst Bluefin customers has seen the company distribute boats into the South Island - the traditional home of the alloy hardtop - as well as a growing number of boats into Auckland and the Northland region.

The strong selling point of the Bluefin range has always been that of a 'kiwi finnie' with a few minor appointments without getting into the higher costs that are incurred by purchasing other brands. Basically, Sportcraft has marketed Bluefin to provide exceptional value for money to new boat buyers.

*The cockpit sink is a nice feature, gas bottle is stored in the locker below.*



Our test boat, the 720 Lock-up Weekender, is quite similar to the standard 720 Lock-up except it has a couple of extra 'weekender' features. The most notable of these is the separate shower and toilet compartment in the forward port corner of the cockpit, complete with califont. I had actually walked through the boat at the recent Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show, and was impressed with the level of appointment and more so with the display window price. So I was quite pleased to learn that I was going to be testing it out the very day after the show finished.

### Cosy interior

The 720 Lock-up Weekender has a definite accent on comfort whilst still being a dedicated fishing machine. Forward of the cabin there is a very spacious full-length V berth with centre infill, and storage space underneath.

The inside of the cabin and wheelhouse is fully lined with carpet and has one of the tidiest and warmest finishes of any hardtop I've been on to date. Plenty of airflow is gained by not only the main access door but also sliding side windows on both port and starboard sides and as you would expect with any craft, a foredeck hatch provides both light and ventilation.

The main area of the wheelhouse around the helm is certainly a compact space, mainly due to the proximity of the full-length bunks for'ard and the narrower profile of the wheelhouse due to the wide side decks.

The helm seat consists of a built-in base, with a storage shelf and further storage space below. The passenger seat consists of a pull-out seat that rests on the back of the toilet and shower unit.

When sitting in the passenger seat, you do feel like you are sitting a bit upright and slightly more forward in the boat than the skipper, due to the shower and toilet compartment immediately behind you. But with the addition of the centre bench seat infill, there would be enough room for four people to be sheltered inside once underway. While they weren't fitted on this boat, internal roof rails are available as an option should you wish.

One design aspect of the Bluefin 720 Weekender is the generous access to the foredeck via the wide side decks. With the advent of the modern day helm operated anchor winches there is often very little need to get around the front. However if it is easy to get for'ard, you'll find yourself utilising it more and more, for fishing, casting soft baits etc.

The wide side decks are also utilised for accessing the top of the hardtop. Rails are built into the roof, a good tie down point should you choose to store a small inflatable.

The 720 sees the hull constructed from 5mm alloy, with 4mm sides. Under floor buoyancy and upright positive buoyancy under the gunnels is also built into the boat.

### Room to fish and more

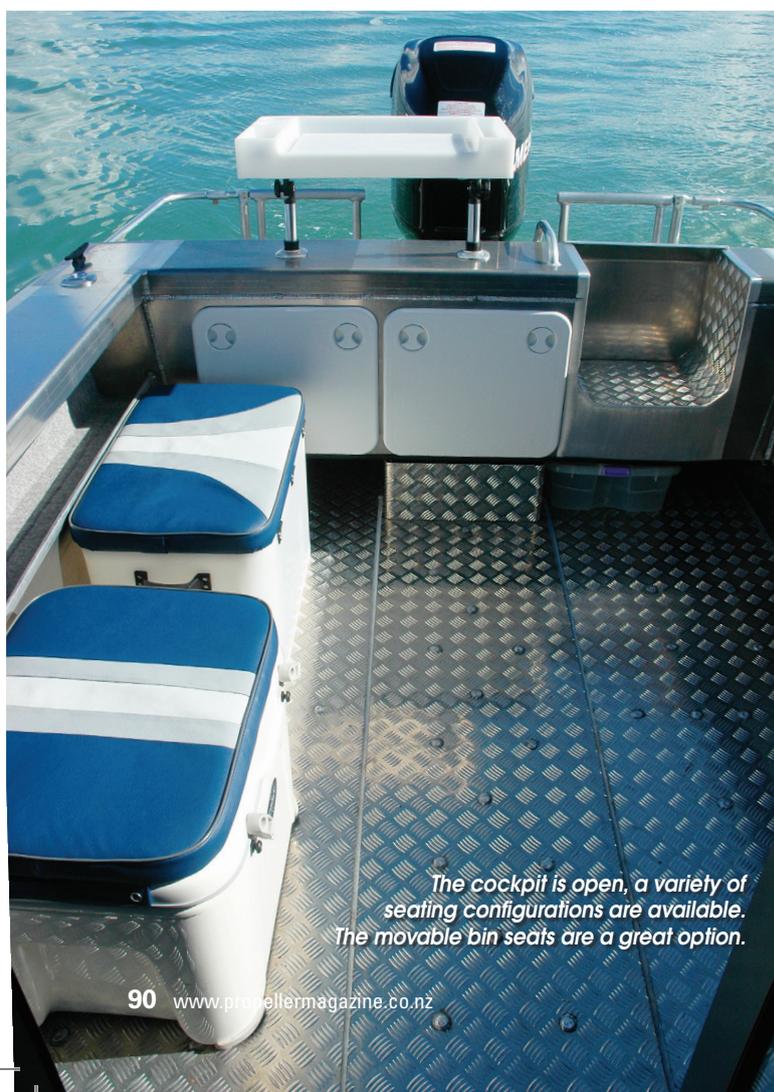
The main feature of this 720 Weekender is the enclosed shower and toilet unit. Instead of having the toilet situated forward - which lends to very little privacy, the Sportcraft team has developed the cockpit toilet/shower concept, a neat feature that is going to be more than favourable with the female fisherman. A point made by Jamie Black at Sportcraft boats was who really wants to sleep over the top of a toilet anyways.

A califont is also installed, fed by a 100L water tank, which comes in the form of a bladder under the floor in the wheelhouse.

Storage is quite plentiful, though there are no under-floor compartments in the cockpit. Carpeted side shelves provide great storage options for rods, etc. In the forward port corner of the cockpit, a storage locker with hatch houses the gas bottle as well as plumbing for the tap and sink located above.

Aft, the batteries and oil tanks are located up off the floor in a locker built into the transom.

Rod holders are plentiful throughout the cockpit, including the rocket



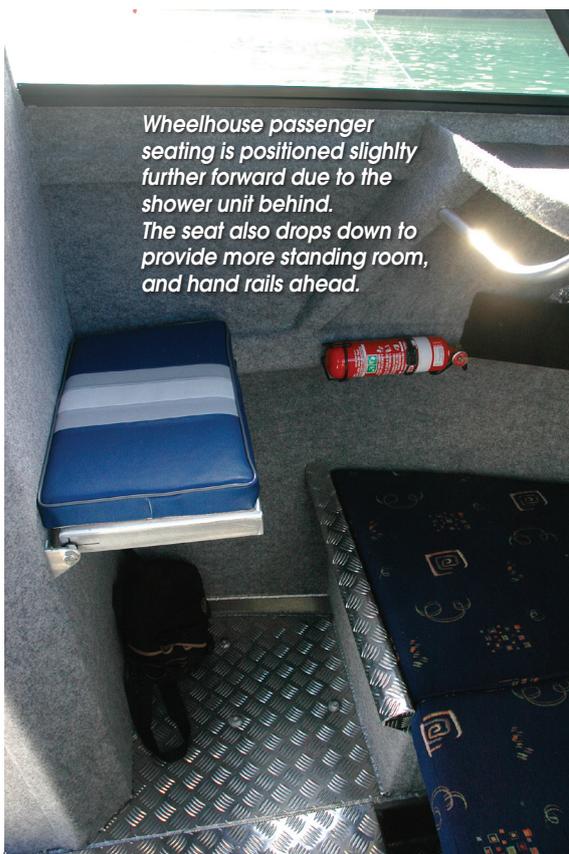
*The cockpit is open, a variety of seating configurations are available. The movable bin seats are a great option.*



*Plenty of rodholders, hand rails and a cockpit light for nighttime.*



*The separate shower and toilet unit accessed from the cockpit makes the 720 a true weekender.*



*Wheelhouse passenger seating is positioned slightly further forward due to the shower unit behind. The seat also drops down to provide more standing room, and hand rails ahead.*

launcher above; vertical rod storage is also available on the inside of the shower unit.

Being a larger sized hardtop, the overall design has an accent on fishing and diving, which is where boats of this style gain a lot of favour with kiwi boaters. This particular model has a boarding ladder on either side, though only the one walk-through, which is located in the port corner. Some extra railing was added around the boarding platform as an extra feature, though it's something you can do without should you wish. However, the railing itself actually forms part of the boarding ladder.

Should you require more seating, there are a number of options that can be adapted to suit. For this boat, the team elected to fit a couple of removable bin seats with upholstered lids, easily removed or repositioned around the cockpit to suit.

### Power Aplenty

As it always seems the case with boat tests, we get 25knots plus when testing family runabouts, then mirror smooth conditions for bigger offshore hardtop craft. Test day for the Bluefin 720 Lock-up Weekender was to be no different!

Though having been in a number of Bluefins, historically they do handle rougher waters with relative ease. A combination of a 17-degree deadrise, with a slight gull wing at the chines delivers a pretty good ride when it gets rough. All boats seem to have their quirks and mannerisms to get to know in order to get the best out of them; I've never had a Bluefin do anything untoward, even in the trickiest of conditions. You certainly don't come home feeling worse off than when you set off.

Driving the 720 was pretty comfortable. In calm conditions you can easily just sit back and relax; under rougher conditions, standing is also very easy and comfortable.

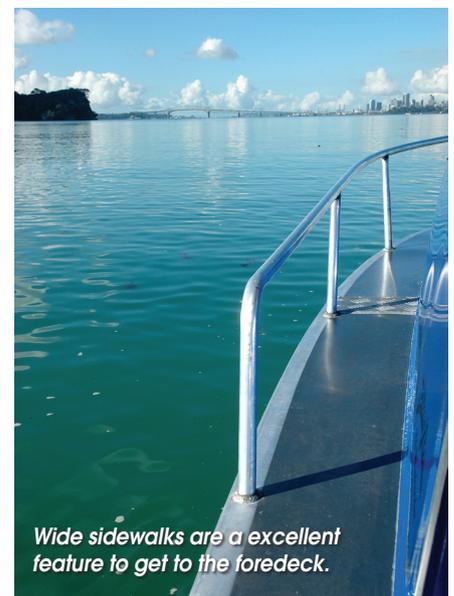
The dash area was very tidy, the instruments were very easy to view and well organised, the throttle control for the engine was also well positioned. The forward dash area was fully carpeted also, and had a handy lip that would prevent anything from sliding off while underway, such as charts, cell phones etc.

This particular boat was fitted with the Mercury OptiMax 250hp outboard, the most powerful rated for the 720. It's always nice to have loads of horsepower on tap, though you don't have to have a 250; a 200hp or 225hp would be sufficient. The 250hp certainly provided some super grunt out of the hole.

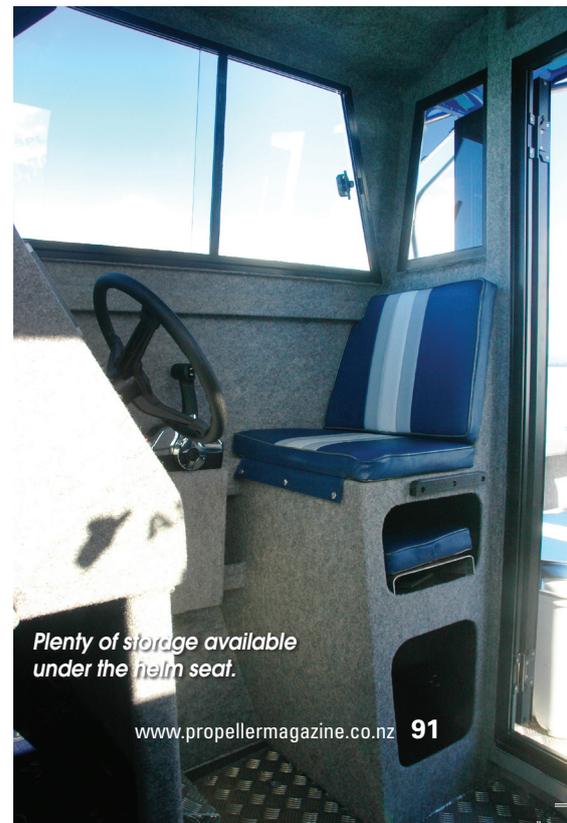
On the mirror smooth conditions we experienced on test day we managed to achieve 48.0mph @ 5700rpm - pretty good considering this was the first time ever this engine had been run through to maximum rpm. This particular boat was swinging a 17" Vengeance propeller, providing plenty of bite for some get up and go.



*A seat infill can easily be fitted into place to provide extra passenger seating in the wheelhouse.*



*Wide sidewalks are a excellent feature to get to the foredeck.*



*Plenty of storage available under the helm seat.*



Provision is already made to fit trim tabs should you choose.

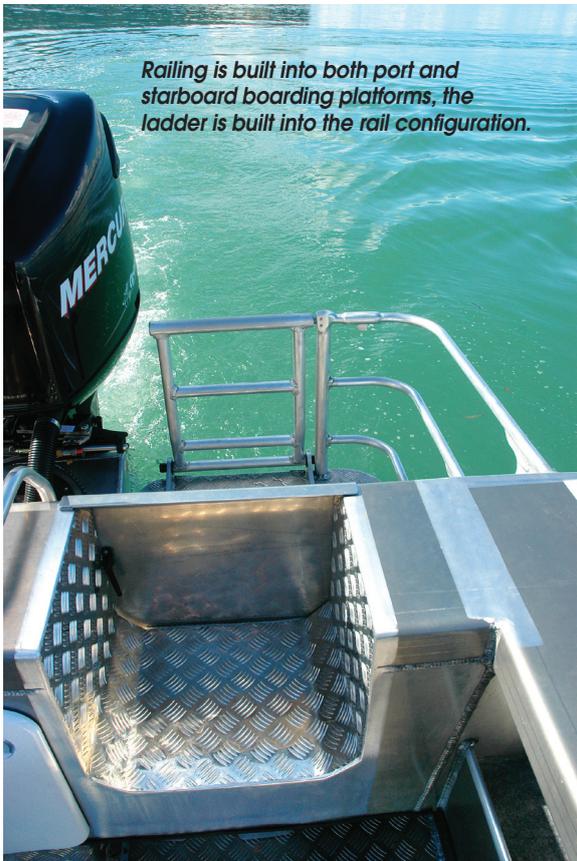
My test companion on test day, Scott Black of Sportcraft boats, has a 720 Lock-up of his own, powered with a 225hp OptiMax, and he reports it will push his craft along to 50mph, so with the 250hp and a few more hours, expect this combo to nudge the 50mph mark also. Unfortunately, I couldn't get any fuel figures as this was the boat's maiden voyage and the fuel system hadn't been calibrated as yet, but the 180L fuel tank and the OptiMax's direct injection

technology would certainly give an impressive range. With the OptiMax's traditional excellent fuel economy, I would say you would have more than enough fuel to go to the Barrier and back.

Trim tabs weren't fitted to this particular boat yet, but there is provision already built into the hull to handle them when needed – a definite box you should tick.

Overall this as-tested package of \$93,795 provides outstanding value for money. Though should you spec the boat with a smaller engine or even a less expensive EFI two-stroke outboard, you can get a 720 Lock-up weekender package onto the water for as much as \$69,750.

There aren't too many manufacturers out there that can provide a boat and engine package combined with a list of standard features at the price that Sportcraft can.



Railing is built into both port and starboard boarding platforms, the ladder is built into the rail configuration.

*Standard features on Test Boat*

- ✓NVHF ✓Carpet ✓Depth sounder
- ✓Bait board ✓Anchor chain/warp
- ✓Nav lights ✓Bilge pump
- ✓180L fuel tank ✓Califont
- ✓Toilet ✓Shower ✓Gas bottle ✓Sink.

*Notable Options on Test Boat*

- ✓Painted top ✓Windlass
- ✓250Hp Mercury OptiMax upgrade
- ✓Garmin touch 7" colour GPS
- ✓Twin batteries ✓Walk thru transom
- ✓Rear boarding rails & ladders
- ✓Trailer brakes ✓Upholstered chilly bin
- ✓Fishbin seat ✓Drink holders ✓Wiper.

**Make:** Bluefin  
**Model:** 720 Lock-up Weekender  
**Designer:** Sportcraft Boats

Priced From:	\$69,750
Price as Tested:	\$93,795
Type:	Hardtop
Construction:	Aluminium
LOA:	7.69m
LOH:	7.2m
Beam:	2.55m
Deadrise:	17 degrees
Height on Trailer:	3.05m
Trailerable Weight:	1800kg
Engine Capacity:	200-250hp
Power Options:	outboard
Fuel Capacity:	180L
Water Capacity:	100L

**Performance**

Revs	Speed MPH
580 rpm	5.5mph
1000 rpm	7.3mph
1500 rpm	9.8mph
2000 rpm	11.0mph
2500 rpm	17.5mph
3000 rpm	26.0mph
3500 rpm	30.5mph
4000 rpm	35.0mph
4500 rpm	37.0mph
5000 rpm	42.2mph
5500 rpm	46.0mph
5700 rpm	48.0mph

Speeds recorded on a Lowrance GPS

**Engine**

Make:	Mercury
Power:	250hp
Model:	OptiMax
Cylinder Config.:	V6
Displacement:	3032cc
Max rpm:	5700
Propeller:	17" Vengeance
Retail Price	\$29,810

**Trailer**

Make:	Sportline
Braked:	Yes
Suspension:	Leaf
Rollers:	Multi roller
Std Equipment:	jockey wheel
Retail Price	\$8750

**Manufacturer:** Sportcraft Boats Ltd  
 www.sportcraftboats.co.nz  
**Boats supplied by:** Sportcraft Boats Morrinsville  
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