



Polycraft 530 'Warrior' Centre Console

Polypropylene boats are now enjoying unprecedented success on waterways across Australia as more consumers learn to appreciate the virtues of these incredibly tough, almost indestructible (yet completely recyclable) boats built in Bundaberg in central Queensland. Having tested the 530 Bowrider in January (F&B#116) we were looking forward to testing the Centre Console as in so many ways, it is a much better application for this exciting new boat building material.

The test we published in F&B#116 was quite controversial, and caused a lot of hand wringing and head shaking up in Bundaberg where these craft are made. Central to the factory's concern was the writer's criticism of the finish and some aspects of the design of the 530 Bowrider.

So no doubt there are some Nervous Nellies about in respect of this test - but they needn't worry too much. When reviewing a centre console, the standards or benchmarking we use, are relative to a centre console, which, by definition, is a fishing boat.

When we test a bowrider, and it's put up to us for review with a \$32,000 price tag, then our readers would think we were just plain stupid if we were to ignore the fact that for \$32,000 you can buy any one of half a dozen imported American bowriders that are infinitely better designed, built and finished than anything produced here in Australia for \$32K.

Here, the rules have changed - and not in a small way, either. With the 530 Polycraft Centre Console, the Polycraft team are working up a model specifically designed for fishermen, and as a result, this review will look at

The Polycraft 'Warrior' 530 Centre Console in that light.

Design

The Polycraft 530 Centre Console is a huge 17 footer (5.3m LOA) with a massive 2.40m beam and a hull depth of 1.2m, all of which adds up to a 700kg polypropylene package.

It has a shaft length of 20" (long) and a maximum horsepower rating of 115hp. It has a 130L under-floor fuel tank and carries a people capacity of 6 inshore, or 450kg.

The base statistics don't really tell much of the story do they? It's only when you stand inside the 530 Centre Console that you realise how big it is - this is a seriously big boat, with flat, carpeted floors and a level of stability that is unbelievably good. It's rock solid underfoot, a feature that will be welcomed by fishos everywhere. The hull is quite interesting and follows the lines we've become used to now from the Polycraft design team.

Typically, it's quite a deep vee down the centre with two supportive "wings" on either side of the chine, a technique that one-time Brisbane boat builder Ralph Morgan made famous, and was followed in later years by Alf Stessl in his Tri-hull tinnies.

It's a good concept and it works very well. It allows the manufacturer to put in a deeper vee through the centre of the boat and importantly, keep it deeply veed right into the forefoot area under the bow. This is the bit that cuts through the water first, so it follows that the sharper you can make that knife-edge, the softer the ride will become.

With a semi-tri like this, it gets better, because as the water is turned over and down off the forefoot, the wave is then compressed by the tunnel between the main hull and the winglets.

This not only generates lift (as the water is compressed through the tunnel) it creates an almost catamaran-like effect as far as the stability is concerned. These winglets are almost 2.0m apart, and run right back to the transom of the boat, where most of the weight of the outboard, battery and fuel is located.

This is very good design, and importantly, very safe design. Not only is the customer getting a softer riding boat than most, he's getting a much more stable platform to work from. As

Specifications:

Standard Features

Centre console unit including steering cable, helm windscreen and stainless steel screen rail
Bow rail
Bow roller
Stainless steel split bollard
Carpeted floors and hatches
Front and rear storage bins
Cable steering
130L underfloor fuel tank
Rear fold out lounge
Bait/storage box
Boarding rails
Transom plate
Rod holders
Decals

Optional Extras:

Six piece front cushion set
Two piece rear cushion set
Boarding ladder
Glove box
Hydraulic steering
Cutting board
Survey standard

well, because the Polycraft 530 CC has a double skin of 10mm of polypropylene, its core of buoyancy renders this craft with level floatation - and isn't that a good feeling?

Nobody wants to talk about boats being swamped, and fortunately very few of them do. However, there's always the chance things could go 'pear-shaped', and in a centre console, especially a fishing boat, it's more likely to happen than it will in (say) a runabout or cuddy.

Whilst it is true to say most Dads wouldn't go anywhere near ocean bars in their 5.30 Bowrider or Runabout, that isn't the case with fishos working in a centre console. Most of them see the bar at the mouth of the river as the front gate to the fishing paddock; for them, crossing an ocean entrance is simply par for the course.

Most of the time they get it right - and Australia's mosquito fleet of small fishing boats that ply the eastern and western seaboard contains many very skilled fishos - but with the best will in the world, there's going to be the odd occasion when they get it wrong, and it's more likely to happen on the way out, than on the way back in.

And that's where this boat has a heads-up over just about every pressed centre console tinny made in this