

# F&B's Small Craft Section

## Bluefin's 5.25 m Family Bow Rider

**I**t's been several years since we did the first Bluefin test report, when the whole Bluefin team (builders, coffee makers, cutters, fabricators, welders, cleaners – *yep, all 3 of them*) came down the launchramp for the first all important sea trials of the very first Bluefin.

In those days, Alan, Marg and Daryl did everything, were everything and worked everything, scrabbling around as one has to do in order to get a business off the deck and running.

It's with no little pride we joined them last week for a run in their latest production, the seriously impressive 5.25 Bluefin Bowrider.

They've certainly come a long way



**No doubt the toughest game in town is building small pressed aluminium tinnies for a living. To do so successfully takes a special brand of grit and determination, and that's the one thing Gold Coast based Bluefin Boat Company has plenty of – along with a mighty good range of boats that are earning a very good rep in the vital value for money stakes. PW reports . . .**

from the first boats we promoted back in F&B issue #46 haven't they?

**Design** This is a big pressed tinnie, having higher than normal topsides, so that not only has the volume of the boat increased, its dryness and comfort in choppy water has also increased pro-rata as well.

Fundamentally though, it is a big, beamy, high sided bowrider where a not insignificant space is allocated to the seats in the front of the boat, whilst the helmsman and passenger are located amidships, with enough room

left over for a genuine stern cockpit abaft the helmsman and passenger seats.

Make no mistake, this is a pretty big boat, and as we settled into it, it became increasingly apparent that this rig has application that is wider than we thought feasible.

**Construction** The Bluefin 5.25 is a pressed aluminium, planing outboard powered boat, with 3mm sheet on the bottom, 2mm on the topsides and 4mm wall thickness on the pod located on the transom.

These are all what the Industry considers “normal” figures for a boat of this configuration.

Pressed tinnies are quite lightly built, as they rely not on the sheet aluminium for their strength but the ribs that are *pressed* into a special shape that forms the hull on a large steel jig.

Left to their own devices, the long thin sheets of aluminium are quite weak and easily bent – so the ribbing process on the steel jig is a terribly important aspect of these boats’ construction.

It’s also the reason why pressed aluminium boats up to about 5.5m are significantly lighter than fibreglass boats of the same length. In turn, the pressed aluminium boats need far less horsepower than fibreglass boats of the same length.

Here, the Bluefin 5.25 was fitted with a 90hp 2-stroke Mercury which provided near 35 knot (40 mph) performance from this 138kg three

cylinder 2-stroke outboard – scintillating performance from a mid range, economical outboard.

Importantly, the Bluefin 5.25 is a very well featured boat, with very little to spend on it, and virtually everything a family needs to go boating built in ie the smaller items such as the split bow rails with bowsprit and roller, the back rails, stern ladder, full carpeted floor and 85 L fuel tank – all of these features are standard equipment, so there’s not much else to put into the boat is there? About the only thing we could pick on the day was the ubiquitous ice chest, but as most people have one of these in the garage with their camping gear, it’s not exactly a disadvantage of note not to have one built in. Most boatowners prefer to have them loose so they can position them around the boat that best suits the day and the load, with more than the odd ice chest doing double duty as a trim tab or ballast in most boats these days.

**Finish** We were again impressed by the ever increasing standard of finish on the Bluefin range, and specifically this bowrider. It’s not quite up there with the top jocks yet, but nor is the price – and for the price, it does represent extremely good value.

This is a very difficult issue for boating writers because there is open conflict with readers and boatowners as to what in fact does constitute the ideal level of fit-out.

For example there is a world of

difference between this Bluefin, and say a new 520 Signature fibreglass bowrider and again, either of the two Aussie boats compared to an American Bayliner or Searay.

Each boat type has a different level of finish and fit-out and it’s not correct to say that the Searay or Bayliner is necessarily better than the two local products. Most Australian boatowners believe the imports are *too* soft in their finish, and feature many products that simply cannot withstand Australia’s harsh weather conditions.

This isn’t the venue to debate the issue, but it’s certainly one we are very mindful of these days because the aluminium sector, and that includes this Bluefin, has lifted its game so much, that we have to pay tribute to the efforts they’re making in order that you and I can be more comfortable in our tinnies or fibreglass boats.

Here, the Bluefin comes standard with cockpit floor carpet, comfortable swivelling seats, nicely padded cushions around the bowrider section, a sensible walk-through windscreen – hey, it doesn’t get much better than this in the land of pressed aluminium boats.

**Engineering** Fitted with the three cylinder 90hp 2-stroke Mercury, the Bluefin 5.25 had heaps of power. This particular engine is not one of our favourites because of its cutout system that for some unknown reason Mercury see as a benefit when you’re tootling around the marina. The theory of having the engine drop from three

