

Dominator 7000 'Canyon Runner'

It's been quite a while since we had the opportunity of testing one of the three big Dominator Canyon Runners, a range that includes the 5600, 6200 and this 7000 model. Having received many requests from readers across Australia for more information about this spectacular craft, we jumped at the chance to work the boat inshore and offshore in the break following its display at the Brisbane Boat Show. In this special report, Editor Peter Webster looks at the state of play in the world of powered catamarans.

A lot of water has certainly passed between the tunnels of many thousands of Markham Whalers and Dominator Cats since those heady days back in June-July 1977 when a much younger Mark Hookham and a slimmer and decidedly younger editor drove madly up and down Pittwater, NSW, day after day, testing the first composite plywood/glass Markham Whaler.

The original boat was 4.3m long runabout, and we played swapsies with three different Chrysler outboards – a pair of 35's and a single 50 for days, trying to get the best possible combination for the remarkable little boat.

Getting the little boat 'right' was an extraordinary achievement, and without any doubt, it went on to become one of the most profoundly important small craft ever designed and subsequently built in volume in Australia.

Hundreds and hundreds of Markham Whalers were subsequently sold in the original 4.3m, then 4.9m, back to the 4.0m Bass Boat, before Mark Hookham launched the first big 5.8m "Canyon Runner" at the end of the 1970's.

With the assistance of the NSW Government, Mark Hookham subsequently moved his wife Pat and small tribe of six kids to a decentralised industrial location in Port Macquarie, a move that has been very

successful for the Port Macquarie community ever since.

We have tested virtually all of the various Markham Whalers and the later derivation, the Markham Dominators over the years, and watched as the product has slowly changed and evolved into the infinitely more sophisticated, world class product that it has become today.

One of Australia's fast disappearing breed of formally trained boat builders and designers, Hookham is something of a rarity now, as few other manufacturers have his design skills or knowledge of high performance powered catamaran design and boat building.

Not without his critics over his decision to stick with asymmetric hulls, Hookham none the less has always retained an enviable reputation

Editor Peter Webster has had a 30 year association with powered cats of almost every type ever made and has owned and operated 5.0m, 5.6m, 6.7m, and 7.3m SharkCats, 288 and 328 Powercats, a Dominator 6200, a Cairns Custom Craft 5.7m Alloy Cat as well as testing just about every other major cat model manufactured in Australia in the last 30 years or so. F&B magazine is about to take delivery of a new alloy 6.5m Cairns Custom Craft Cat specially fitted out for marine photography and equipment research.

as a boat builder, and the quality of his construction, the integrity of his design and the technology he has used, has always been in the forefront of world boat building practice.

This is not just a grandiose 'motherhood' statement. The writer is aware of several tours Mark Hookham made of the UK and the United States in the 70's and 80's, and from these fact finding missions, Hookham was able to bring back to Australia a number of boat building practices which are only now becoming considered mandatory, let alone the preferred option.

There's no better example of this than Hookham's use of polyurethane foams as a buoyant material that is poured into the hulls to create a massively strong sub-structure in a boat that becomes totally unsinkable.

It needs to be recorded that Mark has been doing this since the late 1970's – nearly 23 years before the National Marine Safety Council started beating the drum for the need to change Australian boat building standards to embrace so-called "positive" poured foam floatation (if not polystyrene) as a mandatory feature of Australian trailerboats.

As a preface to the following test, it should also be noted that whilst the writer has enjoyed a personal and professional relationship with Mark Hookham stretching back the best part of 30 years, there have been periods of

The big Dominator 7000 has a great stance in the seaway - there's no 'nose droop' and the bows have excellent lift. Owners of the old 560 Sharkcat won't believe how good this boat is until they try it - and admire the way it holds up the big 4-strokes, AND the crew working right down on the tuck. A fabulous fishing platform, it will handle anything, anywhere, right up to 37kg IGFA class tackle systems.



Specifications

Hull length	7.0m
Beam	2.5m
Draft	400mm
Freeboard	1.0m
Cockpit depth	800mm
Horsepower	2 x 115hp to 2 x 200hp 2-stroke, and 2 x 115hp to 2 x 150hp, 4-stroke
Weight* dry (hull only)	1650kg
Cockpit area	2.8 x 2.3m
Towing weight*	3,000 kg
Fuel capacity	2 x 220L
*Approximate only, includes hardtop, excludes fuel and accessories	

