



Fisherman & Boatowner FIELD TEST

OMC Haines Hunter 635SF Challenger

Introducing one of the most interesting new boats to come from the Haines Hunter stable for years.

Report & Pics by Peter Webster

It's been a good month for boat tests. Here's another that not only surprised, but provided a great deal of pleasure to drive and operate during the test, and left us with the feeling that the future of the Australian boating industry is in good hands.

This Haines Hunter 635SF Challenger is another from the drawing board of Haines Hunter designer and production chief Ben Hipkins.

Ben has had a particularly difficult time with the R&D development at OMC Haines Hunter. It is common

knowledge that the American parent company (Outboard Marine Corporation) is strapped for cash on the International stage, and local budgets have been paired back to the absolute minimum. For Ben, this translates to having to achieve big miracles on very small budgets – and it manifests itself on boats like this where he's re-worked an existing Haines Hunter hull with as much new tooling as his budgets will allow.

This makes the challenge considerably harder for him, but he's certainly risen to the occasion with this

very fine walkaround fibreglass sports fisherman, aptly named the Challenger.

The Haines Hunter 635SF Challenger produced one of the best test results we've experienced for some time, and shows just what a competent package you can build in 6.35 m overall. In fact, it really throws into question the whole issue of just how big a boat do you need? And how much horsepower do you need to hang off the transom to get real comfort, safety and fishing convenience in a

bluewater fishing rig?

Design: The 635 hull has been around since about 1985 when it was first produced as a very slick sports cruiser. The original hull has always been considered one of the finest of its kind ever produced in Australia so Ben had a classic pedigree to work with when he set about re-working the moulds for about the seventh time in their history.

Targeting a sports fishing rig that would provide spectacular performance

from a 150hp FICHT engine, or the heady combination of economical performance and reliability from twin smaller 90-115hp V-4 FICHT engines, Hipkins consolidated the mass of data he's accumulated these past few years from his national dealer network. He's also taken onboard the input from Haines Hunter owners across Australia and produced a very simple, practical deck and cabin layout that achieves class winning status.

Essentially, the 635 SF Challenger is

