

New Life For The 5.2 m Kevlacat Cuddy



For readers who have just discovered F&B, and aren't yet conversant with the history of the people involved, we should declare up front that we owned a Kevlacat 5.2 back in the 1980's. Known as the *Krazy Kate*, the Yamaha 60 hp powered 5.2 was not just hugely successful, it basically earned the sobriquet of becoming 'the all-time favourite' project boat the Webster family has ever owned.

That's a pretty big statement, and at a recent family barbecue, the subject of boats came up again (funny that!). It was one of the rare times these days when the three brothers (Jeff, Jody and Jamie) were together with their sister Tracey. It was interesting to note that after all these years and countless boats, *Krazy Kate* was still remembered fondly as 'the' boat they had all particularly enjoyed. It always felt safe, and caught a hell of a lot of fish over the 18 months we owned it.

Back then, the boat was run everywhere from Townsville's Cape Bowling Green to virtually every fishing ground from there right around to Whyalla, in SA.

The particular boat we had was not especially built. It was a regular 5.2 Deluxe model, but no different to the 150 or so other Deluxe models that were built and sold at that time.

Interestingly enough, the original *Krazy Kate* is still around, and although the engines have no doubt been changed a couple of times, when we last had a good look at it, it was fascinating to see just how well it had stood up to 10-12 years of very hard work.

Few, if any other boats in Australia would have fished further afield for longer, than *Krazy Kate*.

Today's Model: It is still in regular production to this day, and virtually unchanged from the mid 80's when it was first released.

Recently we had the opportunity of re-testing one of the 5.2's off the Sunshine Coast in good conditions, but with enough sea running to get a good "feel" of the boat with a

pair of Honda 50 hp, 3 cylinder 4-stroke outboards.

Fifty horsepower was always considered the smallest you could use with a 2-stroke, so I was initially concerned that with the heavier 4-stroke configuration, the performance would be a bit disappointing.

As it transpired though, it wasn't too bad at all, but I'd still prefer to have a 60 hp/2-stroke than a 50 hp/4-stroke if I was going to redo the sort of tripping about we did with *Krazy Kate*. Knowing that sooner or later, I was going to have to run the Wide Bay Bar, or come in through Narooma's deservedly infamous bar, I'd always opt for the bigger engines.

On the other hand, if I was based pretty much permanently (say) in Mooloolaba, or was working out of the Hawkesbury River, coming and going from a really good entrance that is only closed when you can't fish outside anyway, then I wouldn't give it another thought - 50's would be the way to go. The 4-stroke 50 Honda is an amazingly economical engine and with something like 50% fuel savings on offer, you'd have to be nuts to go with a 2-stroke wouldn't you?

Heading Offshore: Stepping on board with Kevlacat boss Fred Teminck at the excellent Mooloolaba launchramp at the entrance of Point Cartwright, it all came flooding back - the memories of high action, great excitement and fantastic fishing from this wonderful fishing platform.

Just walking around the cockpit makes you feel good - it's so stable, so comfortable and so beautifully laid out. This particular boat didn't have our centre fish box (an optional extra) but everything else was virtually the same.

A cabin you can sleep in at a pinch or for a snooze. A good spot for storage and perfect to secure valuable fishing tackle away from the mongrels that knock off other people's fishing gear.

The Relax seats - comfortable, swivelling, fully adjustable with squab seats behind them - are still fitted, so the Kevlacat 5.2 seats four anglers in some comfort, all snug



and dry under the "wheel house". This is also identical to the set-up we had in the 1980's. They've actually added a little reverse canopy to cope with Qld's heat better - a good move.

Some years ago, I described this Kevlacat 5.2 as 'the best 17 footer in the world', and as we headed out through Mooloolaba's entrance, I decided that the description still wasn't too far from the truth.

This is still a stunning 17 footer. The ride is superb, the handling impeccable, the boat's inherent stability and seaworthiness is second to none. It simply hasn't got any better than this, despite some pretty good efforts from Hookham, Noosa Cat, Cairns Custom Craft and so on. The little 50's were fine - the boat cruised nicely in the mid 20's, with the Hondas humming away in the background and having more than enough herbs to push the boat on and off the seaway as the skipper demanded. Sure, it will go quicker with 60 or 70's but you don't need it.

In fact, the older you are and the worse your back problem - you need less horsepower in direct proportion. For guys like that - with a crook back or hips, I'd strongly recommend these 50's. At the "sweet speed" on these 50's (around 5,000 r/min) the ride is unbelievably comfortable and soft. No worries here with back ache or hip action.

New Model: Readers will be interested to learn that in fact, Fred Teminck is about to give the 5.2 a make-over that will see it become a 5.8 metre model.

Essentially, the front 7/8's of the boat remains the same - but the transom arrangement with the older style, bolt-on alloy pods will be replaced by a full fibreglass hull bottom that will remove the alloy pods altogether. In the process, the properly lengthened hull will increase the buoyancy of the Kevlacat at the stern quite markedly, so that it will carry the bigger 70-90 hp 4-stroke engines with ease.

The Kevlacat factory expect the costings of the new 5.8 will be scarcely any different to the 5.2, because it will be so much easier and faster to build.

It will be interesting to keep an eye on this boat in the coming months to see how the new 5.8 model emerges - but in the mean time, put this one on your shopping list - as either the 5.2 or the new 5.8 - it is without doubt one of the best GRP cats ever produced in Australia.

For further information about this model or the new 2100 Kevlacat please call Kevlacat Australia 12 Main Drive, Warana, Qld, PO Box 234 Buddina, Qld 4574. Phone: (07) 5493 3799 or Fax: (07) 5493 3168
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