

F&B's
HOT NEW DESIGNS!

In the wake of Whaler, Dominator & Twinfisher

The Raider 4.1m Cuddy



Introducing a brand new fibreglass catamaran designed for fishermen on a budget who are not prepared to sacrifice seaworthiness, safety and value for money just because they're buying a smaller boat. PW Reports . .

I've been very good really, these past couple of years. As long time readers already know, the writer has been something of a cat believer over the years, and has owned many fine twin hulled craft.

Indeed, I'm on record as saying that the Kevlcat 5.2 has always held the mantle as one of my all time favourite craft, and along with the traditional SharkCat 23, and the original Mark Hookham designed Whaler 4.3, the Kevlcat determined many of the benchmarks for boat safety, performance and handling that we use today.

But I've been able to curb my enthusiasm the last couple of years and

apart from a delightful experience with that wet and wonderful Cairns Custom Craft 5700, have managed to restrict myself to a series of monohulls of various shapes and sizes.

For a while there, some of you old hands thought I'd even turned over a new leaf, and I know of at least one reader who felt that I'd virtually deserted the cat movement. "Webster," he said, "You're boat testing perspective is in danger of becoming normal!"

Well, as they say folks, you can't change a leopard's spots – and I've just tested a hot little catamaran that would blow the socks of any plate aluminium boat within a metre of its length up or

down!

Jeez, it was good to get back into a *real* boat!

Design The Raider 4.1 Cuddy as you can see, is not the world's best looking boat, not by a long chalk. Designer builder Ian Nobbs, from Precision Patternmaking & Fibreglass Pty Ltd in Ipswich Qld, is not about to apologise for drawing out the waterline length from the stem to the transom to utilise every single inch he could, either.

Ian quite correctly figured that the longer they are, the softer they ride, and although this is true of any boat, mono or cat, it is particularly true of cats.



The stability at rest or underway in this Raider 4.1 Cuddy is astonishing.

There isn't a monohull in the land that even approaches the stability of this quite small 4.1 m cat, and similarly, there's no 4.1 m boat with the same ride softness or rough water performance, either. You'd need to be looking at 5.5m boats to get this sort of ride comfort and stability.

It's all pretty good stuff, isn't it? So what are the drawbacks?

Well, in truth, there really aren't any drawbacks in small cats like the Raider, beyond the fact that they are simply *more expensive* to buy. To operate to maximum efficiency, they need two engines, and even though the engines are only 30-40hp engines, two

of them still costs twice as much as one.

There's also the trailer issue. Trailers for cats always cost more money and whilst it may not be a lot of money, it's still *more* money.

And in this day and age of GST, when you take all these extras, roll them up into a package and whack on 10% for Mr Costello, then the significance of all the bits that cost more, start to really add up.

As shown here, the complete rig, with trailer, but without motor(s) comes in at a total price of \$14,975 (incl GST) which is a quite a lot more than a 4.2m Quintrex Breezabout (or similar mono with just one engine.

So that's the disadvantage isn't it?

It's not really about the boat itself, so much as it is an issue of financial packaging.

On the other hand, *because* the Raider *does have* two engines, it is (obviously) safer, more reliable, cheaper to troll . . . and so on !

HHhhmmmmnnn! That all needs some careful thought . . .

Design Features The Raider 4.1 is a very nicely finished small craft.

The skill in fibreglass is not something Ian's learned overnight – his business in Ipswich Qld, has been working in fibreglass for more than 20 years. But they're better known in the industrial fibreglass world for the work they do for Volvo Trucks, so for them,



Tight design, a good use of available space - and the preservation of a huge fishing cockpit (complete with sealed floor and a fully self draining deck) puts the Raider light years ahead of the 'tinnie brigade' of pressed mono hulls.

putting the plugs, moulds and tooling together for a fibreglass boat was scarcely a challenge given the complexity of the industrial work they're often called upon to complete.

And it certainly shows in the way this boat is built. The hand finishing work is excellent, the standard of glass lay-up and laminate appears to be very good, and although there was a couple of soft spots in the floor, these will be ironed out in future production models.

If you study the photographs carefully, you'll observe the very high standard of fit-out, too. The twin seat and storage boxes are standard equipment, as are the side pockets, enclosed battery compartments, a very good anchor well, long range fuel tanks, under-floor buoyancy in separate compartments and a general commitment to quality that was refreshing to say the least.

Ian must have said to me five times during the test "I'm still learning this boat building business." But folks, I hope he doesn't learn too much more, because right now he's a long way in front of where many of our "boat builders" have been.

If "learning" simply means he's eventually going to take out all the good features, then I'd like him to stay right where he is, thank you very

much!

We should explain I guess, that Ian's inspiration for this boat did come from the Twinfisher Series, the popular aluminium fishing boats made in Orange, NSW. Ian Nobbs is a keen fresho fisherman himself, and he wanted a whole bunch of special features built into a one-off Twinfisher. But this didn't fit into the Twinfisher scheme of things, so he decided to build his own.

Performance Fitted with the two Mariner 40's, quite heavy but smooth and quiet engines, the Raider 4.1 logged a top speed of 29.9 knots turning the props at 5,400 revs. This suggests there was still a bit more to go.

Ian's still tuning the props and I wouldn't be surprised to see him pull the speed up to around 31-33 knots when he's had a bit more time to run the engines in and take a little of the pitch out of the props and possibly a little out of the diameter.

We'd like to see those engines running at about 5,600-5,800, and that will spin up a few extra knots at the top end. Nevertheless, we were running downhill with the wind behind at around the 30mph mark, and that's a pretty good speed in a boat like this

with just a couple of forties.

Importantly, it cruised beautifully at 20 knots, right on 4,200 revs offering a good combination of fuel consumption and overall speed.

We didn't do the full fuel trials on this rig because Ian wasn't happy with the propellers and the engines were still very tight and very new. We've learned that with 4-strokes you're better off to do the fuel trials when they've had 40 or 50 hours on them, to get a more accurate reflection of their likely running costs in the future.

But in a stop-go sense, running through the entrance to the seaway, plus up around the bay, the Raider had plenty of horsepower.

The handling of the Raider 4.1 was very good.

It's a real little cat though. Thus it leans outward in the turns, and it's pretty wet offshore in choppy conditions, especially if you have a couple of blokes right up forward, and the trim has to go down for a soft ride and/or you can't keep it going fast enough for the boat to work on top of the water.

Time-Out: Readers, could I remind you here please that I'm describing what were test conditions where we were deliberately over-driving the boat

to find out what did happen when you drove it badly, or too fast or too slow.

Under normal circumstances it's actually quite a dry boat with a very soft ride. My point is that if you don't think about the trim and you put a couple of big heavy blokes forward, under those circumstances, the Raider starts throwing the water around

Providing you keep the speed up, the boat is heaps of fun, and it's a dry as a bone because the entry point on the hull is about underneath the driver's feet ie, about two thirds of the way back down the hull. Now providing you can keep it there, the boat will run like a scalded cat (pun intended) through pretty serious rough water.

There's nothing, absolutely nothing in pressed aluminium that would even see which way this little cat went offshore, and for all those blokes out there with crook backs and hips, who're just about ready to give up on their tinnie, Gentlemen! The solution is at hand!

Handling Inshore I think it should be made very, very clear that Ian Nobbs quite wisely doesn't promote this boat as an offshore fishing boat. It's only 14' long, folks and you have to keep this firmly in mind.

At one point, we were about 3 miles offshore working around the break that forms the bar at the entrance to the seaway here on the Gold Coast, and I started chuckling to myself because really, it was all quite absurd. I was out there thinking "Jeez, this is a pretty damn good boat" with Ian Nobbs (not a small fellow, either) standing right beside me and Ruth Cunningham sitting on the box on the port side. As we're cruising through the wave sets, I was thinking "Oh, it's pretty good, perhaps just a tad wet . . ." when it dawned on me I was comparing it to a bunch of Signatures and Seafarers that I'd been running over the past week or so, and this little boat was actually up there being compared to them!

But nevertheless, it is a small cat, and you do have to keep that in your mind. Cats are not infallible and they have a couple of areas of vulnerability.

For example, if you are in really steep-to conditions in a bar, it's not unknown in small cats for the props to leave the water.

The problem with this is that you've just lost power and there's no way the boat can be driven out of the wave set

Raider Costings

Mercury/Mariner Motors (With pre rig kits, electric start, long shaft, power trim & tilt, except 30hp which has no power trim & tilt)

Centre Console on trailer, 2 x 30hp ELPTO \$23,702

Sports Cuddy on trailer, 2 x 30hp ELPTO \$24,963

Centre Console on trailer, 2 x 40hp ELPTO \$24,884

Sports Cuddy on trailer, 2 x 40hp ELPTO \$26,145

Centre Console on trailer, 1 x 60hp ELPTO \$20,859

Sports Cuddy on trailer, 1 60hp ELPTO \$22,120

Yamaha Motors (With electric start, long shaft and power trim & tilt)

Centre Console on trailer, 2 x 40hp CV \$23,214

Sports Cuddy on trailer, 2 x 40hp CV \$23,475

Centre Console on trailer, 1 x 60hp CV \$19,964

Sports Cuddy on trailer, 1 x 60hp CV \$21,225

(Prices shown are subject to change without notice)

its dropped into, unless the props get their bite back on the water.

This type of problem calls for a cool head and a lot of experience, so I urge readers interested in using this boat in a typical mixture of inshore and offshore conditions, to make sure you practice with the boat for some time before you start tackling heavy weather bar crossings.

For make no mistake; this little boat is more than capable of looking after itself and the crew in pretty rough conditions. So there will be the temptation to run it wide offshore when in fact it's not really designed to do that.

However, it is an absolute pearler for that situation so many people experience where they need a boat they can take offshore to the Four Mile Reef for a bit of bottom fishing early on Saturday or Sunday morning. They come home before lunch or when the wind pipes up, and spend the afternoon up the river with Mum and the kids. Or up in the dam the following weekend looking for bass, or down south in the Snowy, in search of some big browns. It's very hard to think of a boat that's better equipped to handle such multi-tasking.

Safety Well, it wins the safety award hands down. With 4 separate compartments along each side, all fully sealed, twin hulls, a genuinely self draining cockpit – try and get that in a regular mono hull under 20' long! And a degree of seaworthiness and seakindliness unparalleled in this length, the Raider must be described as one of the safest small boats made in Australia.

Application As noted, it's an absolute classic for multi-function family boating. Few other boats have its capability. And because it's actually such a small craft, you don't need a 4WD to pull it either.

At 1.1 tonnes, this can easily be towed by virtually any family sedan or wagon, let alone the mid range and large 4WD's.

The trailer works a treat, was well designed and like all small cats, encourages the owner to simply drive the boat on and off the trailer. Of course this results in a little bit more bearing maintenance than might otherwise be the case, but the sheer convenience and speed with which it can be driven on and off the trailer negates the disadvantage of having to more regularly re-pack and/or replace the wheel bearings and seals.

Summary One of the best small boats we've encountered for several years. Certainly up there with the Twinfisher and Markham Whalers, and a long way ahead of aluminium boats of this length – or for that matter, a metre or so longer. As noted earlier the only real disadvantage with the Raider 4.1 is the fact that it's going to cost more to put the package together with two engines.

But that's all part of its charm and it's what makes it so special and so safe.

At the end of the day, it really comes down to deciding what you are prepared to pay to have one of the safest boats made in Australia.

Fortunately, it is also one of the best handling, softest riding and most useful boats of its type available in the country.

Well done Ian, and welcome to the boating industry.

For further enquiries about the Raiders, please phone Ian Nobbs at Raider Marine (07) 3288 6100 or fax (07) 3288 6101

F&B