

We've all talked about it. Argued about it. Debated the issue fiercely. For many readers, it is THE single most debatable issue. The point from which countless other decisions unfold. In this interesting report, Scott Shepherd, a widely experienced boating family man, an avowed fisherman and GRP boat enthusiast, joins the search for a close friend and central Queensland identity, Darryl Branthwaite, as the pair pool resources to find the perfect boat - and take it home (the long way) to its Boyne River mooring.



ACQUIRING THE DREAM: - *Is Secondhand The Best Way To Go?*

This trip actually started months before on the kitchen table of my mate, Darryl Branthwaite's place in Tannum Sands (just south of Gladstone, QLD).

Only a few days after he sold his 22' Leader to a W.A. buyer, he was lost to the Internet and Trader-A-Boat, until he found the boat of his dreams.

A phone call to me in Brisbane had me looking as well. His parameters were defined by his desire to introduce his wife and "billy lids" to the GBR, which from his place, is only 25 to 40nm away as the MerCruiser flies. The boat had to be

close to 30' LOA, be able to do 30 knots, cruise on 25, and be able to sleep 4 in comfort with an entertainment area. For \$65K, tops.

This is where it makes interesting reading if you have ever bought a second hand boat, or maybe, one day soon, you are going to. Read on carefully, so you can avoid some of the pitfalls we encountered.

Another tip - get on to a good broker early in the search. Although you might find a huge variety of boats on the 'Net, a good broker will

**Story, Pics & Comment by
Scott Shepherd For F&B
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not only 'cut to the chase' faster, he or she) can usually offer a great deal of invaluable advice.

Especially if you are just starting out in a new category. Such as moving up from years in a trailerboat. You might know heaps about trailer wheel bearings, but what do you know about stern glands and stuffing boxes? Believe me, it can be a very complicated new world out there, and having a good broker on your team is a huge assistance.

Darrell Carlson from Australia Wide Boat Sales at Newport Marina, Scarborough, QLD served us well.

So the weekends came and went. We looked at 20 boats or more

before he settled on a 28-foot boat that I cannot disclose the details of, for fear of crushing the poor owner's ego. Darryl came down to Brisbane and we organized a test run. Everything seemed okay, except there was no GPS or speedo to do a speed check (very convenient as we found out). The owner assured us we were doing 30 knots. I cocked my eye at Darryl, he cocked his eye at me and there we stood - *cockeyed!*

This 28' LOA boat was powered by a 5.0 litre MerCruiser V-8 with a Volvo Duo Prop stern drive unit. A combination such as this one should be adequate, however this was a very beamy boat and could have done with a few more horses strapped on the transom. Darryl had to return to Tannum Sands, so I took over as his eyes.

The FIRST Deposit

A deposit was paid, then Darryl arranged with the broker to Travel-lift it out of the water, to check out underneath. Everything about this boat screamed out at us not to go ahead. The best money you can spend when buying a boat 25 foot or more, is to lift it out of the water and preferably have a marine surveyor check it out. I jumped in with the owner, the broker and my trusty little Garmin GPS45 handheld and headed around to the Scarborough Marina Travel-lift.

So it was. This so called "ideal boat" turned out to be a lemon, and a very ripe one at that. First off, the Volvo Duo Prop leg had more sideways step in it than Darren Lockyer. There were more layers of antifouling on the hull than in one of my wife's lasagnes, and the indentations from the bodgie repair work would have swallowed up Tony Greig's keys. I tell you, they were the good parts! The owner must have felt more embarrassed than a dackless Sam Newman for trying to sell such a monster.

The so-called 30 knot performance topped out at 22 knots on my G.P.S, the gas stove and hot water system were not certified, the advertised new clears were old, hazy and torn - and to top it all off, there was a huge structural crack in the floor up front I could have parked my bike in. The \$300 lift and survey fees were non-

refundable, but it proved to be money very well spent.

Having a budget is very important, as for an extra \$5,000 on any price; you can get a lot more boat for your money. Buying new was out of the question, as the budget that 'Money Jenny', (Darryl's wife) allowed, would only get a new version of what he had just sold. Not that there was anything wrong with his 22-foot Leader, it's just that Darryl desired the lifestyle of a 28-30 foot boat. So second-hand was the only option.

Narrowing It Down

The next two weekends saw Darryl and I cruising the Brisbane and Gold Coast for another chance to spend his money. There were zillions of boats to choose from, but the 4 berth sleeping arrangement narrowed it down to a few handfuls. Then the dollars narrowed it down to a handful. The entertainment area then narrowed it down to a pair of Bayliners, a 2755 and a 2655, both in reasonable condition.

Darryl had his heart set on the 2655 Bayliner at the Runaway Bay Marina, which met the criteria he desired. The broker assured us it was what we wanted and viewing it personally, we agreed.

The spondoolie was just about to vanish from Darryl's wallet and a test run was organized when the broker told us "Mate, she'll do a good 22 knots and cruise on 18 all day". Well, I reckon a stake through the heart would have been less painful for Darryl - after that statement; it was back to the drawing board.

This IS it . .

So then there was one. The lone Bayliner 2755 that is now his pride and joy. The equipment on this boat was 'as new' as the owner bought the boat only a matter of two years before as a run-down American import. He then set about reupholstering the lounge, fitting it out with modern electronics, upgrading the hot water system, adding water filters, new stove,

The Debate: New or Used?

This is the question that could be classed as one of those pub discussions that never get resolved.

Weigh up the pros and cons and it will appear as clear as mud. On one hand, the trouble free running of a brand new rig straight from the showroom floor is an option hard to resist, hey? Cast your eyes over to the other hand, and you'll discover that you can buy a lot more boat for your money buying a secondhand rig.

Let's take \$50,000 for an example. Go shopping new and you will end up with a well fitted out 5.0 to 5.8 metre Haines Signature, Cruise Craft or any one of the many GRP brands available. Then there are the many bauxite derivatives, like Quintrex, Stacer and such in the 5.5 to 6.0m range.

But what about secondhand? Well, you could go to a number of older 7.0 or 8.0 m Bertram's, Haines Hunters or many plate alloy boats on the market in the 6.5 to 7.0 metre range. These would have the ability to be a hell of a lot more comfortable anchored out overnight in your favourite spot - providing everything works.

Purchase new and everything you put your hand on, should do as it is intended to, from lighting up your dash to flushing that blind mullet away. Purchasing a boat 10 years longer in the tooth and you may find yourself bailing out when the bilge pump packs it in, bailing in when the deck wash goes south, and swearing and cursing at that sounder and GPS you're stuck with that you don't like.

All this and I haven't even mentioned the trailer yet! Believe it or not, if you live any further than 40 or 50k from the boat ramp, your trailer is your most important investment. Picture having a \$50,000 boat upside down on the highway because your trailer spring snapped or the draw bar rusted through. That won't happen to a new trailer, will it? New or used. Well as you can see, I'm on the fence on this one. I'd love a new Signature 630F, Whittleby 700 or Cruise Craft Outsider 685 parked on a new Mackay trailer in my garage, *but then . . .*