

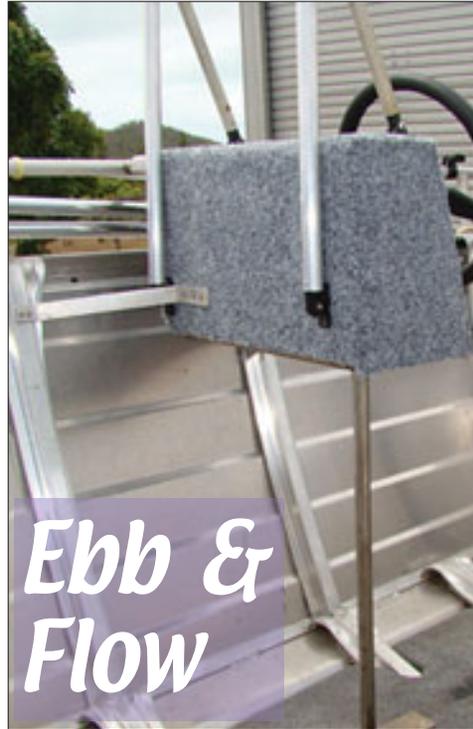


Neil Dunstan: Tiller Steer or Console?

When I purchased my Quintrex 445 Dory eighteen months ago, I purposely bought the simple model without any additions so that I could make my own mods as I went along, and got a feel for how the boat would work.

One of the things that I left till last was a decision on whether to use a tiller to control the boat, or install a console of some sort incorporating forward controls and wheel steering. I must admit that I am a bit partial to tiller steering as it is so simple and trouble free plus it is much easier to control in confined spaces. However, I had an open mind on the subject as I had owned boats with both systems and both had their good and bad points.

When I first brought the boat home I had purposely bought it with no motor for just this reason and expected to make up my mind before I finally purchased the final motor to be fitted. As I had an old 15hp Mariner 2-stroke in the shed, I decided to use this as a starter just to get a feel for the boat, and



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so for a couple of months, I tootled around with the Mariner. I was quite surprised at the performance of that little motor, as it would get up on the plane and cruise along at about fifteen knots providing there were no more than two on board. I then started to take it out to sea a little way on good days and caught quite

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a few good fish from the boat in this period. However, when a friend who owns Sarina Marine told me he had a 30hp Tohatsu spare and would sell it to me at a really good price, I decided to purchase it. The Tohatsu was a manual start, manual tilt motor which was not what I

really wanted, but I figured that at the price offered I could try the tiller steering system in the real world for a while and finally make up my mind which way to go.

As it turned out the little Tohatsu did a really remarkable job on the big Quinnie and as it had only eight hours on the clock when I bought it, I reckoned it would still be as new when I decided to sell it after twelve months or so.

Twelve months went by and the outfit did a great job, we did many trips up to twenty five miles out to sea on good days with the Tohatsu remaining true to type in that it idled terribly, started first time every time and went like the clappers when the throttle was opened. As I am getting a bit past it to be pull starting, manually tilting and tiller steering, especially when coming home in a North/easterly for a couple of hours, I decided that I would upgrade the system to forward controls.

One of the things that finally decided me to change was my normal trolling method. This

consists of two rods in rod holders up forward so that I can watch them while driving and a third rod in a rodholder on the back of the rear thwart in the centre.

The reason for this is that I run a lure or rigged bait well back behind the boat from a long rod that keeps the line high enough for the two forward lines to pass under the rear line when turning. This of course is nearly impossible as the tiller arm can't pass the rear rod in its holder and I have to lift the tiller arm up every time I want to pass the rear rod. So apart from sheer laziness there were enough reasons to go for forward controls with electric everything.

The first thing I looked at was modifying the Tohatsu as it had done such a good job, so prices were obtained for electric start, after market trim and tilt and the bits to convert it to forward controls. This turned out to cost more than the motor was worth so that idea was ruled out and the purchase of a new engine with all the extras I wanted was decided upon. I won't go into all the pros and cons regarding four

stroke versus two stroke, suffice to say that based on the fantastic run I have had from my Barcruiser 530C half cab which has a 115 h.p. Suzuki four stroke engine fitted which I love, I decided to install a 50 h.p. Suzuki four stroke on the Quinnie. I must also admit that I would have happily used the 2-stroke for the job if it had had the extras to make it a bit easier for me to operate, especially as the price was less than half the cost of an equivalent 4-stroke.

The Suzuki was decided on and it would have all the whistles and bells and electric everything, but as I am keeping this outfit for the rest of my fishing days I am hoping that the expense will be worth it.

Once the engine was decided on, the order was placed and the work on preparing the Quinnie for the new engine was begun. I decided to install a side console for the controls because a centre console takes up too much room and when anyone wants to move around the boat they have to go up one side or the other instead of up the middle, and in a small boat this can be dangerous in any sort of a seaway.

Also I thought that I may want to occasionally camp on board overnight and the side console was the best fit for this purpose. As I

always sat on the rear thwart to steer with the tiller controlled Tohatsu I reckoned that this was the most comfortable position to steer from so I wanted the helmsman's seat as near to this as possible.

Because I like to make as much of the equipment for my boat as possible myself, I fabricated a pedestal seat to mount in front of the rear thwart with enough room to get behind it if needed then fitted it to see how it all looked. Straight away I didn't like it as by the time I mounted a side console in front of it, it took up too much room in the boat which is, after all, only 4.5 metres long.

It was then decided to mount a swivel seat on a bracket attached to the front

“.. and insulated with plastic gaskets made from some ice cream container lids. .”

of the rear thwart and this turned out to be much better in terms of convenience and saving space.

As I don't have a mig welder I fabricated this bracket out of some stainless steel tubing and stainless flat bar which I had laying around, and which I could weld with an ordinary

home type stick welder using the correct rods. This was attached to the front of the thwart with eight large stainless self tappers and insulated with plastic gaskets made from some ice cream container lids and turned out to be quite a solid mounting.

The next problem was the side console and after shopping around the best I could do was \$750 for a console which was not all that brilliant anyway and still required the steering box, wheel and cables for another \$400. I then decided to have a go at making one myself, and using the same home welder I made up a frame out of stainless tubing and riveted some alloy sheeting over the outside.

The whole lot was covered with a piece of outdoor carpet which was glued on with silicone because I wanted to fasten my GPS, the compass and the mobile phone to the top of the console using Velcro so that I could pull them off and use them on the Barcruiser when it was going out.

Also when you get into your seventies you tend to fall around the place a lot and knock bits of bark off all the time, so this protects one a bit from these occurrences. Besides the carpet makes it look quite good and covers up any crook workmanship.

Once the assembly was completed it was fastened to the floor with stainless screws and also to the side safety rail with a heavy stainless bolt. This was achieved by welding a stainless nut inside the end of the tube, drilling a hole through the rail, inserting the bolt and locking it up with a couple of home made nylon washers between for insulation. One of the main considerations for this part of the installation was that it was all bolted or screwed into place so that it could occasionally be unbolted, folded back out of the way to allow the floor to be removed for cleaning and removal of any stray sinkers etc that may get into the bilge.

I am currently waiting on the delivery of my new Suzuki 4-stroke and it will be fitted as soon as it arrives.

My wife worries a bit about me being out on the water by myself all the time as she thinks that I am getting to the age where I may suffer a heart attack or a stroke or something equally as bad. I reckon if that is what is going to happen then out on the water will do me; I am not going to sit home just in case - so bugger it, I am going fishing.

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