



Presenting the seventh and final instalment of F&B's resident DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Tony Ravenscroft's excellent 7 Part Series rebuilding a Mako 20 from little more than scrap.

Rebuilding The GRP Mako 20 - Part 7/7

After months of weekend slavery, all the construction work was done. It was time to make the boat look pretty. When you put the shiny surface back on a boat, the process is generally called refinishing.

To refinish the Mako, being a fibreglass boat, I had two choices, paint or gelcoat. Paint can be broken down again into several sub-options as there are many different types of paint, each with its own set of advantages and disadvantages over the other. But they all can be directly compared to gelcoat. For refinishing the Mako I wanted to use gelcoat because I

personally felt it was a better option than paint of any type, the problem I had was that no one does it. Meaning that even though I could come up with several good reasons why gelcoat was going to be far superior to paint, all the refinishing work on boats I had seen done was always done with paint.

The question "Why not?" was bugging me because I knew the answer could also raise some serious issues. Obviously it would be best to get a clear answer before I proceeded, but no matter who I spoke to, I really didn't get one. At least not one I was satisfied with to the extent that I would

give up on the idea of refinishing the Mako with gelcoat. As is usual for me, I worked out the answer myself the hard way and I now know why no one refinishes in gelcoat.

The answer to why no one refinishes in gelcoat is actually hidden in why it looked like such a good idea in the first place.

At the top of my list of things I liked about gelcoat over paint was that its surface is so hard. Compared to paint of any type it is difficult to scratch. It also is so thick that light to medium scratches can often be rubbed out with wet-or-dry abrasive paper. This sounds good, however the very hardness of it made it very labor intensive to polish to a gloss finish. The very thickness of it also meant that the product as sprayed was also very thick and that guaranteed a great deal of labor intensive abrasive work, generally by hand, to get a smooth gloss finish. If it was paint then it's different, because paint, or more specifically gloss top coat paint, is very thin both in its liquid form and in the finished state on the job.

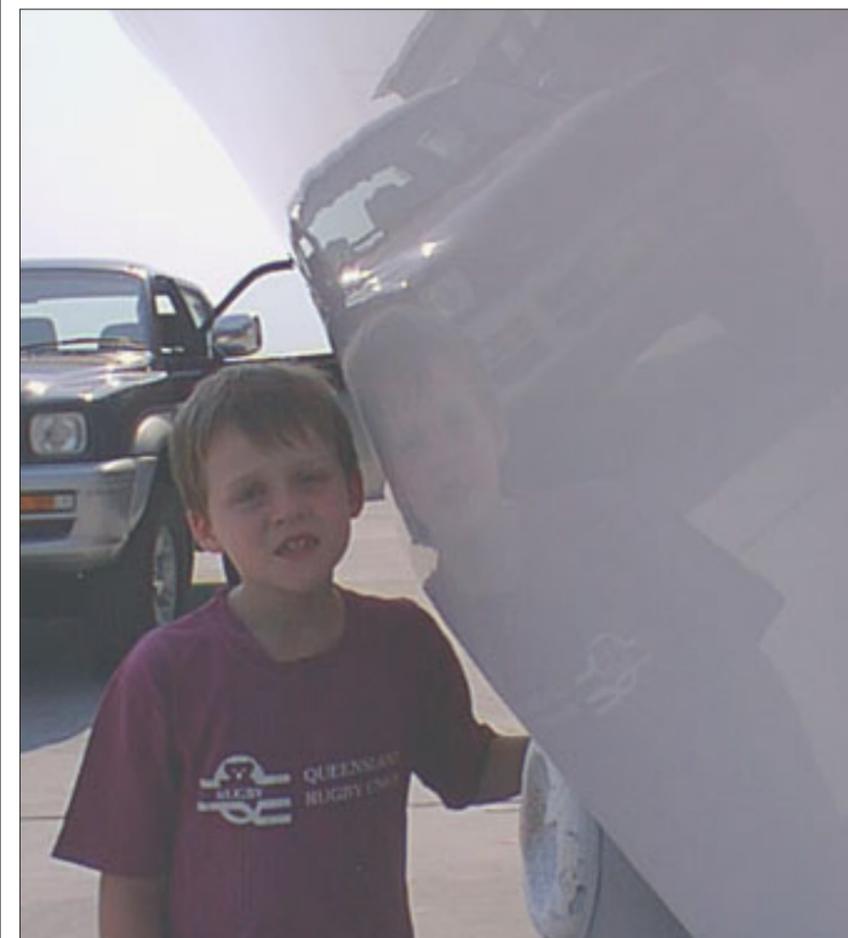
The equipment used to spray it is also different to that used for gelcoat. The result of all this is that if applied correctly then you get a high gloss finish instantly, straight off the gun (spray gun) as they say in the trade.

Now I'm not completely stupid (the editor will include his own comment here) because all of that is semi obvious to someone with even a little boat building experience. However I was also taking into account all the time and effort that went into preparing the boat for spraying paint. That time and effort, I argued, would not need to be spent in a gelcoat refinish. So even though I would need to spend time cutting and polishing the gelcoat, the time I saved by not having to do as much preparation work would offset it.

The bottom line was that it simply didn't work out that way. Time very much became the enemy. When you are talking about a labor intensive task, you are also talking about intensive time. When you only have weekends to work on a project then that can have a major impact. If you are comparing a job that may take two days to complete against a job that may take eight days to complete then on a weekend only basis, you are really talking about two days against a



Nice look isn't it? This is what is called a guide coat - the idea is that when I have sanded all the red off then I know I have been everywhere. There are several ways to apply a guide coat, ranging from special powders to a simple spray can of almost any fast drying paint. That is the case here, this is red enamel from an aerosol can. What you can't see is the gale force wind that was blowing on the day. The red should be a light evenly sprayed mist. But the paint kept blowing away so I had to get very close with the can and as a result it is much heavier than it needed to be and very patchy. Even though I have other pictures of the boat lightly guide coated properly I thought you might get a laugh out of this one!



Here is the final result of all my hard work. This is gelcoat not paint, so I at least proved to myself that I could successfully refinish the Mako in gelcoat. My son David was supposed to stand where I could get his reflection in the side of the boat to capture in a photo the hi-gloss surface. Unfortunately I couldn't get him to understand that the picture was for the magazine and smile. I still don't know why he insisted on the pained expression.

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