

Refitting The 'Cheetah'

This is Part 3 of Aaron's 4 Part series fitting out Loche and Nicole Ahtong's 2600 Powercat to make it a viable heavy-tackle fishing platform. It's being set-up to help Loche's advancing itch to tangle with larger game fish, while not compromising the boat's capacity to be comfortable as a week-ender, cruising vessel for him and Nicole . . .
Aaron Concord reports

Special 4-Part Series By F&B's Fishing Editor, Aaron Concord

Fitting The Rod Holders & Outriggers.

Where I left off in Part 2, was the final pick up of the "necessary" rod holders, outrigger bases and rigging kits for the 'riggers to fit to *Cheetah* so I could, with Loche's help, turn the cockpit of his Powercat 2600 into a workable, usable space for sport and game fishing.

I use the term "necessary" since our collective minds and Loche's budget had to acknowledge there was likely to be some changes to the rigging of the outriggers, such as the release clips etc, though this was the major buy for the cockpit to make trolling large lures and baits for large marlin possible.

Any other extras would be towards rod storage and a shot-gun rigger though time will tell as to when this will happen and what other modifications seem appropriate after we have fished offshore a few times.

Fitting the Rod Holders.

Loche had been mucking around with the holders and the 3 positions in either coaming where they would fit.

I wanted backing plates for the rod holders instead of washers under the coamings to butt up against the 'glass when fitted.

This was to make sure once we fitted these holders, perhaps other than the odd gimble pin check-up, there would be absolutely no reason to fret about the strength of the holders that, will in time, have a series of bent butt 37kg rods with 80 wide game reels sitting in them, waiting for a crazy marlin to attack the lure swimming along at the bitter end of the line.

Now this "backing plate" demand wasn't meant to be a scare tactic of any sort for Loche's behalf.

He soon realized that the pressures that the mounting bolts and the holders themselves would cop would be substantial, so it was my belief to over-engineer these areas of stress for the longevity of the vessel and the expensive attachments. I don't ever want to see gear failure while fishing or travelling to or from the fishing grounds, since this vessel will live offshore where rocking and rolling will

place stress on all of these fixtures.

Holder Reinforcement

Loche decided to make up the stainless steel backing plates for each holder so when the bolts go through, the backing plate is slid up the tube flush under the coaming. Nyloc nuts are used to prevent the nuts coming off through vibration.

This scenario of "sandwiching" the coaming with the top of the holder against a backing plate offers the largest area for pressure displacement, where washers would offer far less help in spreading the load for the bolts or the holder's neck.

I got the call from Loche to come over to help him fit the holders after he fabricated the backing plates and was ready to start fitting the holders.

When I saw the backing plates it was obvious Loche had spent quite a bit of time on them, to the point of putting a rounded flange to stop any possible thought of the plates bending.

They were heavily engineered which is far better than having sissy gear fail at a most inopportune time! Loche also pre-drilled the bolt and tube holes for each individual holder as well.

Step one was to do the rear holders first.

Due to the small bait tank-cum storage bins in either corner being completely glassed in, the placement of these bins prevented the rear, flat line holders from being positioned any further aft.

It just isn't possible if you want the backing plate installed for added

strength.

Therefore, we removed the original holders and slightly routed out the holes to allow the heavier gauge holders to slot into where the old ones had been.

These are a 45 degree holders facing directly aft over the transom to be used for the "flat lines" i.e.: line run straight from the rod tip to the water and not via a centre rigger or outrigger. These are the 2 closest lures/baits in a trolling pattern.

I checked the gimble position by dropping a rod in the holder and making sure that the existing holes were going to be useful or not, or if the new holder had to have new ones drilled.

As it turned out, the top of the heavy duty rod holders had a wider "footprint" compared to the old holders, so new holes for the bolts were mandatory.

Loche slipped the holder in the routed out hole, carefully marked out where to drill the new holes using the holder as a template, then drilled away.

Next was to get the good old Sikaflex out to bog up the old holes and also run a good dose around the new bolt holes and the tube hole to prevent any water getting into the GRP and causing problems down the track. Loche wanted a weather-proof seal.

I got underneath the coaming and ran a heap of Sikaflex around the underside then squeezed the backing plate against it to form a nice bond.

Once we put the pressure on with the bolts and nuts, a quick clean up with a rag and some methylated spirits was

