



PLAN 'B' . . . An Exceptional Renovation

Innovative bunch, the West Aussies. When boatbuilder Tim Gilbertson's local lake dried up, and he couldn't take the kids skiing, they decided to go fishing along the coast instead, hence - you guessed - Plan B! This is all about taking a hulk that costs zip - and making it work with good ol' fashioned elbow grease.

I have always been envious of aluminium's ability to create truly customized individual boats and hulls with ease; G.R.P (glass reinforced polymers) has the same ability. High tech and low tech methods are available, but not so obvious or widely published.

In the renovation of Plan "B", I used low tech methods, something that, anyone with basic DIY skills and tools could duplicate. The original plan for this derelict hull was to give it a low budget, structural make-over. That way my kids would have a fun boat to use at our local lake. This plan faulted almost from the start, hence the name.

I started what I regard as a standard rebuild. This is a procedure I've used before on older hulls. It's proven successful in returning derelict hulls back into useful vessels. It is strong, rigid and only slightly heavier, if at all. The initial plan was to strip the hull, rebuild all the subfloor and transom areas and return it back into a twin console bow rider. Great plan, simple, cheap and quick. I should have known better. *The lake dried up!*

By this time I was well into the project, with framing, foam and floor complete. It was pointless returning back it into a bow rider as it would have limited use. Plan "B" was

adopted. It would have to become a dual-purpose boat. Fishing and fun, and finished to a reasonable level, with the view to selling it.

I found the hull for sale in a driveway and immediately saw its potential. We were between boats and my kids had been making noises about not having a boat for skurfing, knee boarding etc. They get cross with me for building boats for other people, yet they don't have one of their own!

It was derelict with rotten floors and transom. The motor was some ancient piece from the 60's, and the gear box was a collection of scrap metal in a bucket. Although the owner did assure

me that the top end worked just fine. I had to keep a poker face with this comment. The trailer, however was useful, most of the value was in this component. The boat was a twin console bow rider, probably of American design, but with Swiftcraft logos on the side. A quick inspection told me that it had probably seen little use on the water. There was only a small amount of driver and trailer damage, but it had seen a lot of neglect.

Following is a brief description of my standard rebuild. The photos do most of the talking; I didn't realize I had something special until near the end of the project, so I didn't take a complete set of photos, although these cover the core of the project. I started by stripping out the hull and all unnecessary structures were removed. I've found it's easier and quicker to completely gut a hull, rather than leave stuff, and try to work around it. If structures are carefully removed they can be put back later, or remade with lighter materials.

The entire hull will be ground out and re-skinned with a layer of G.R.P. this will happen in stages as the frames go in. At this early stage I'm able to remove any twist in the hull.

The hull is secured to four points and using batteries, wedges and a spirit level I fiddled until I got rid of most of the 20mm of twist, the last 5mm just wouldn't come out. This stage is extremely important, the hull must be level in all directions before the first frames go in. Once the first frame goes in the hull stiffens up rapidly.

The hull is thoroughly ground out before reskinning starts, any defects are found and dealt with. The re-skinning is only a light layer of glass although all stress areas keel, chines and spray strakes are given an extra layer of double bias cloth. The hull gave me a pleasant surprise at this time, whoever built the boat initially had done an A grade job. All lay ups were of correct thickness and properly rolled out. This would make the renovation considerably easier and quicker.

I established the height and location of the first frame. Again, this is most important because this one frame will impact on the rest of the project. I split the level of the floor amidships, the fore-part will be under the bow rider, or as it turned out the casting deck. By raising this frame I was able to

