



'PODDING' A CAT

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High speed, outboard powered catamarans are a uniquely Australian creation. Bruce Harris invented them in the 70s, the heyday of cheap fuel and simpler living, but nowadays we go fishing with a hell of a lot more than thongs and a tee-shirt with a smear of zinc cream on our noses.

Now we go with serious stuff, lots of it: live baitwells, deck showers, dozens of rods, outriggers and kill tanks. Not to mention heaps of electronics and the battery capacity to keep it all zapping away in boats with beds, water tanks and toilets - and it all adds weight.

Bruce designed Shark Cats for his times and they had skinny hulls and high, wide tunnels. The designs worked so well that they soon spawned a family of clones the brand names of which are household names as I write. Some brands have slipped from the current list, but their product remains valid in the used market.

The interior fit-out of the older cats that I have had a look at is rudimentary in the extreme. No water tanks and no plumbing, if they have cabins there are no doors and if there are bunk spaces you would have to be a Trappist monk to find comfort on them. Owners of early, high speed powered cats progressively upgraded their existing rigs and as they

went along they discovered that the early genre did not take kindly to increasing loads of stuff.

But I think I am beginning to pick up the first whispers of a trend in powered catamaran design. I'm hearing murmurings from some manufacturers of Aussie powered cats: "mutter, mutter...higher, narrower tunnels.. blah blah" and to understand why we need to explore a little deeper.

I spent 10 years in the company of long distance cruising sailors and witnessed the steady increase in the number of catamarans out there doing it and something I picked up early on is that catamarans do not carry weight well and the spartan fitout of early Sharkcats is indirect testimony to that. It is always a good idea with cats to be a bit ruthless with what you lug about without thinking much about it. Sure a lot of the stuff is important, lots of boating is marina or dock based these days so we need fenders and ropes. You can pull your anchor up by hand if you like, but I am an old fart and I like my windlass, as well as a fresh water rinse of after a swim. All I am saying is have a stocktake every now and again and ask yourself: "Do I really need all this stuff?" When observing what superman is planning to put on board, my wife Robyn has been known to cryptically observe: "Steady, boy. We are only going to Hastings Reef for a snorkel; not heading up the Red Sea!"



Even the top flight professionals like the Noosacat team have used pod systems over the years - especially when the heavier 4-strokes first landed. It was a useful technique for checking laminar water flow, stance, handling, performance, etc, and getting the shape perfected (in ally, usually) before finally re-making the GRP hull mould as we can see here. Top shot is the Nooscat 2400 in Y-2009 with its ally pods, and the lower shot is the upgraded 2400 with the now integrated outboard wells.

