

Anchor Systems For Planing Powerboats

As the sales of both new and pre-loved trailer boats and cruisers continue to climb, an increasing number of powerboat skippers are contemplating lengthy coastal cruises. However, as many skippers have discovered, it is very difficult to obtain meaningful advice on one of the most crucial elements of successful cruising - the art of anchoring properly.

Modern, high performance planing powerboats are easily able to safely undertake quite long coastal passages.

Whether the voyage is to relocate the boat to interesting new fishing grounds “up the coast” or to explore off-the-beaten-track waterways such as the hundreds of miles (and thousands of islands, reefs, lagoons and atolls!) along the Great Barrier Reef on the East coast, or the pristine reef waters north of Carnarvon on the West coast, there is a single common denominator that impacts on every boat – regardless of size.

To undertake cruising, fishing and exploring of this kind, every boat must have comprehensive and effective ‘ground tackle’ (that means anchoring gear) of sufficient capacity, to hold the boat securely overnight. Or more seriously, against the impact of a serious storm or blow that might have required evasive, protective action by the skipper to ensure the safety of his crew and the vessel.

Put simply, whether it blows like hell, or you just want a good night’s sleep ‘on the pick’ or you have to secure the boat in the river or anchorage so it doesn’t end up on the river bank, or other anchored boats – the boat’s ground tackle and its deployment is a fundamental key to the success of the



**Special Report & Pics
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voyage.

Powerboats, small or large, have specific problems as far as anchors and anchoring are concerned, yet very little has been published about it, and very little interest is ever reflected by the boat builders about the matters

involved.

Boat builders usually see anchors as an after-sale problem; something best left to the broker or dealer making the sale. As long as they have built in some sort of anchor storage box and a bow roller up near the pointy end, that’s the end of their interest in the subject.

It doesn’t get much better further along the food chain. The dealer or broker is always going to be more concerned about closing the sale, getting rid of the trade-in, and generally ensuring that a profitable agreement has been reached between all parties.

With all due respect to the dealers and brokers involved, anchors and chain do not attract the same attention as the extra profit lines such as depth sounders, radars and sound systems, etc.

As a result, they tend to be stuck on the boat as an after thought. In most cases, this simply means the local marina boy, or the dealer’s workshop is told to get ‘an anchor’ out of stock, a coil of rope and put it in the new boat’s anchor locker. Rarely, if ever, is the anchor, chain, thimbles, shackles, rope, etc, co-ordinated or considered in terms of securing the vessel safely overnight.

Twenty years ago, the first version of



Generic sand type Generic plough type New Delta plough Genuine CQR plough Manson (NZ) plough Sarca anchor

Above: There is an enormous range of anchors to choose from, including many that aren’t shown here. But traditional anchors (such as the “admiralty” type, let alone the more modern Bruce anchor) do not have a lot of application to modern planing craft. Most small craft - that is, boats to about 5.0 metres, are content to stick with a single sand type anchor, and maybe a second anchor (usually the reef pick) that can be deployed from the cockpit - and either taken forward off the bow, or maybe run ashore and tied around a log or tree. However, if the boat is big enough to stay ‘out’ overnight, and you’d like to be in the same place in the morning when you wake up (!) the sand anchor type is not such a good idea. Better then to move on to a decent plough anchor (and chain) set-up.

this report was actually inspired by the author going through a not dissimilar procedure, although in accepting delivery of the Powercat 328 directly from the factory, the factory had at least ensured the single plough anchor was shackled to the rope. However,

without thimbles to protect the anchor rode from the chain, or any attempt to secure the bitter end to the boat, the whole set up was suspect, to say the least. In fairness, it was better than most — because in those days, the anchor wasn’t normally supplied with

the boat.

As we intended using the Powercat 328 for extended cruising along the eastern seaboard in the years ahead (circa 1985-1986) the author set out to research anchors and anchoring systems from as many sources as we could glean information.

The result was not very satisfactory. Indeed, most available information that could be researched had already been published in either *Australia Boating* magazine (1972-1989) or its sister publication, *The Cruising Skipper* (1984-1989). There, the then Technical Editor, Andrew Bray, had published a great deal of very relevant information concerning anchor rodes, anchors and anchoring procedures — but it was

