

Look & Learn:
BAR CROSSINGS
The Basic Techniques

These spectacular photos were taken by F&B during the filming of a "Signature Boat Owner's Video Manual" in January. The Haines Signature 520 C was skippered by Greg Haines (note his inflatable life jacket and radio headset to stay in touch with the camera crew) and filmed during the run-out tide race through the Southport Seaway Entrance. Obviously, conditions like these call for care and considerable experience to handle safely, but as the video tape reveals, nary a drop of water fell on the 520 C's wind-screen or the occupants during the half hour Greg was coming and going through the entrance for the cameras. It was first rate seamanship in an excellent boat.



Running before sea conditions like this ("downhill") can be quite comfortable, and even a small boat can handle really big seas with some safety. The secret here is to ensure the bow is trimmed up (the motor being lifted up or "out") to ensure it has plenty of lift up forward when the bow surges into the wave ahead. It is equally important to match the speed of the boat to the travelling waves - this takes a bit of practice and some care to ensure you don't overtake the next wave ahead. Ideally, if the boat is positioned slightly ahead of the trough or valley, it can travel for miles quite safely.



Heading out, Greg Haines carefully steers the boat about 10 degrees of top dead centre, presenting the boat at a slight angle to the waves. Going in head-on is pretty hard on the crew and the boat; bear away 10 degrees or so, and the ride becomes infinitely more comfortable.

If you are running out through an entrance (on a run out tide) and you suddenly find 'them' standing up looking at you, try not to lose your nerve; best slow right down, and drive the boat up though it. Remember, if "white" water is already tumbling down the face of the bar entrance wave, it is softer (and far safer) to ride up and over it, than it is to tackle a still building, unbroken, 'green wave'. Boats are incredibly tough, and surprisingly seaworthy; in skilled hands they can ride through some really wild situations. A cool head, nerves of steel and some courage are usually just as important as having the latest engine on the back.



In this situation, Greg has the boat beautifully balanced and totally under his control. The boat is just 'sitting' on the back of the wave, whilst Greg works the throttle to keep the boat running on the wave's back. (It takes a deal of practice and experience to 'tune it' this finely: practice on the small stuff first). After you've done this a few times, and become used to the way the boat feels and responds, you'll build up confidence in the boat. Keep firmly in mind that the old adage "hasten slowly" is a perfect description of what you should be doing. This is no place for speed. The secret is to keep the boat planning nicely, bow up, as you carefully and deliberately run in on the back of subsequent waves. As the boat runs clear of the break, Greg is still keeping off the throttle. Even though he's almost back in calm water, he wisely recognises the need to keep his speed fully in check until he goes right through the harbour entrance and into the smooth estuary waters.

