

Cats Vs Monos: The Ride & Handling Debate



One of the most contentious issues facing today's boating consumer is trying to figure out the difference between the big range of power catamarans now available in Australia compared to an even bigger range of monohulls - the mixture of which has just exponentially increased with the flood of monohull imports from America. Never has the consumer been offered such a diverse and high quality range of craft - both in cats and in monos. In this special report inspired by one of F&B's readers*, editor Peter Webster, a man who's been driving cats and monos for the last 35 years, explores the differences - both subtle and obvious - between the two basically opposed configurations.



One of the issues constantly raised over the last 35 years of my boating journalism, is the debate surrounding the difference between catamarans and monohulls. Always the question is asked "Is it worth paying the extra for a catamaran?" And, "Will I get sufficient advantage or benefit to justify the extra expense?"

Or specifically, "Is a catamaran such as a SharkCat or a Kevlacat, Dominator (etc), that much better than a Signature, Deep Vee or Wellcraft?"

Of course, the answer is subjective as hell because there are no really comparable benchmarks or performance

"gates" to use when making the comparisons. Further, it is virtually impossible to create a testing environment where (for example) we could test a suitably fitted 23' Noosacat against a comparable 23' Haines Signature 702.

A Little History . . .

In order to understand the primary role of the catamaran, and the principle difference it offers to most monohulls, it's necessary to step back 25-30 years when Australian fishermen first discovered the world of offshore sportfishing.

The ANSA movement was born, trailers started to work on the highway, the first 4WD's were invented, and all of a sudden, the

horizons opened up for the sportfisherman.

In just over a decade, the world of the Australian sportfisherman matured from the 15'6" Swiftcraft Seagull, the 5.2m Pongrass Waverider and Haines Hunter 16C, to an altogether different world where Bertram 25's burst onto the scene to really underpin the fledgling gamefishing movement, alongside the big trailerboats that came onto the market in the late 1970's.

These included boats such as the Savage 21 Bluefin (and Mako), Haines Hunter 213C, the magnificent Formula 233 (in its original and proper guise with 2 x 165hp MerCruiser 6 cylinder sterndrives) the Swiftcraft