

Cats Vs Monos: The Ride & Handling Debate



Left: The classic Noosacat concept remains an on-going success because in their size range, metre for metre, cats offer many advantages over similar sized monos. However, they also have disadvantages, and one wonders how successful they would have remained if Australians had been able to access monohulls of the calibre we are now seeing imported from the States - such as the 2006 Grady White walkaround shown here.

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.

Last month, we examined the factors leading up to the development of the modern power cat through the 1970's and 1980's, and contemplated the differences that one can expect in the ride and handling of power cats compared to monohulls.

This remains one of the most difficult comparisons a consumer can make, because it's very hard to get similar craft together at the same time. We have a similar problem this month - in order to make an accurate judgement, in an ideal world we should be able to step from one type of boat to another, but this very rarely happens.

We also made the point very

strongly in F&B #118, that over the last 20-25 years, the gap between the ride and handling of powered catamarans and monohulls, and to a lesser extent trihulls, has closed considerably. Where cats were born of the necessity to have two engines, and further, the dire need for a genuine self draining cockpit with proper scuppers, monohulls of the early 70's and 80's were rarely able to compete with big cats - and for that matter, the little cats from the likes of Markham Whaler, Allycat, Webster Twinfisher, etc.

But as the years went by, and the modern outboard evolved as a very reliable, smooth running

and surprisingly economical engine, the need for two engines on the back of boat fishing near shore, became less obvious. Similarly, the first of the modern sportfishing boats started to emerge, usually by the plate aluminium boat manufacturers, but later on, during the 1990's, by quite a few of the GRP manufacturers, too.

Little by little, the GRP monos and most of the plate alloy brigade started to wear down the powered catamarans' advantages, and of course, the monohulls had advantages of their own - especially if the boatowner was content with just one engine.