



The pocket battleship of Sports Fishers

by Ian Macrae



The new Maritimo 550 was unveiled at the Sydney Boat Show and is a real battleship, designed to hunt the grandeurs. She is based on the Maritimo 52 hull, and incorporates much of the technology the Maritimo team has gained from their offshore racing experience.

In Australia, Bill Barry-Cotter is the unchallenged leader in applying offshore powerboat racing technology to the luxury craft he builds for the recreational market. "There are so many little things on this vessel. For example, the way we mount the steering rack on the new 550 model. Just the way we bolt that down is important, because the pressures on a rudder and the hydraulic lines are enormous. On the race boat it has to be super light and unbreakable," commented Mr. Barry-Cotter.

Bill is the first to admit that designing the hull of a boat is a black science. Take a little thing like the engine water pickups in the race boat. If they are mounted in the wrong place in the hull, it can represent a loss of about four to five knots in speed, and five per cent propeller slip. "So suddenly you have a very inefficient propeller. In a pleasure boat, once you realise how critical that is, the fuel consumption can be reduced by some five per cent which, over a year, is a big saving."

Another example of racing technology put to good use is the mounting of the transducer for the sounder on the new 550. It is a big 3kW version that is 120mm deep. Having that protrude from the hull can represent another five per cent drop in performance. However, using race boat technology, the transducer is moulded in and now only protrudes 2mm from the hull - just enough to give it the water flow

it needs to operate properly. "We have only learnt this recently from experimenting with the race boat," Bill said. "All the skin fittings and bolts are now flush and, after what we learnt from the transducers, we are achieving another 10% in performance."

Bill paused at this point with a kind of "I don't want to give too much away" look on his face.

Position of weight is also important, and the 550 is different to comparable boats built around the world. The engines and the fuel tanks are as close to the centre of gravity and centre of buoyancy as possible. Although, being a boat designed for serious fishing that needs to back up when a fish strikes, the centres have been moved further forward than normal. Again, like the race boat, the angle on the propeller shaft is just seven degrees. This means that the propellers are not going to drag the stern of the boat down when it is backed up at speed.

On other Maritimo models, the angle of the shaft is still only nine degrees, and that has been achieved without using tunnels, which Bill will not even consider in his boats. On a race boat, the ideal angle is between four to six degrees, and Maritimo have come very close to that with the 550.

The hull itself also owes much to race technology. The stiffening is transverse rather than longitudinal, and exotic fabrics replace conventional fibreglass - vinyl esters instead of polyesters. Even the engine mounts are designed to take the stresses and loads of a race boat.

One of the features of the new 550 is the mezzanine deck at the back



of the cockpit. It's an area where guests can watch the action without getting in the way of the crew in the cockpit when there is a hook up. The freezer, the bait preparation area (a removable stainless steel table) and the lures are kept out of sight until needed, hidden under the seats. Everything can be stowed away, so that when the boat comes in to port it can be cleaned up and not look like your typical game fishing boat.

All the underwater electronics, including the big transducer for the 3kW sounder, are recessed in the hull. There has not been any scrimping on the fighting chair either. It is an American release that will set you back about \$25,000. However, in my opinion, the footrest is too close to the bulge of the live-bait tank in the transom, and could create problems for a deckhand if he/she is being waltzed around the deck by a big fish on the end of the trace. The bait storage freezer is also not quite big enough to store the size of bait needed for the big ones, and there is no permanent bait preparation station.

The gunwales are unusual for a game boat. They are 700mm high and 400mm wide. Despite this, they don't restrict a deckhand with a tag pole. They do, however, make it difficult to get on board from a pontoon. It's a case of sitting on the gunwale and swinging your legs over. But coupled with the Black Marlin tower, release rod holders, the lees tripe-spreader outriggers, this 550 means business.

Another design feature that gives the 550 an advantage is the positioning of the integral fuel tanks. There are two, one across the beam amidships and the other aft of the engines. Fuel can be transferred from one tank to the other to balance the boat when fishing. If travelling in a head sea, the fuel can be moved forward to bring the bow down. In



a following sea, the bow can be raised by transferring the fuel aft. The tanks hold 5,700lt of fuel, enough to get you from the Gold Coast to Sydney (and back) and then turn around and head down south again. There are not many game boats with that range!

As most people know, Bill won't have a bar of propeller tunnels or underwater exhaust systems. He says that tunnels set up vibration and underwater exhausts create back pressure. They can also develop a harmonic sound that scares game fish off. Despite this, he has managed a seven degree angle on the shafts by positioning the engines well forward. The interior of the boat is typically Maritimo, with a luxurious saloon that includes the interior staircase to the flybridge. This has proved popular with Maritimo owners, as has the very efficient galley, complete with pantry. They have also managed to squeeze in a combination washer/dryer. A lined rod storage locker is provided at the rear of the saloon, but the overhead handrail is missing – a necessary item when rolling around the ocean trolling.

The accommodation is along the same plan as the Maritimo 48 Cruising Flybridge, a double berth and ensuite to port, another double up front, and a third cabin with crossover bunks.

The first 550 is powered by a couple of 1,000hp Caterpillar diesels, mounted well forward in the hull, that push the boat along at 37.5 knots. That's pretty quick for a game boat, and I'm sure there aren't too many that will beat her out to the fishing grounds when she's at full song. A lazy 700rpm will see the boat trolling at around 7 - 8 knots, and best cruising speed is 1,500 rpm and 20 knots with 17lt per hour total fuel

usage. Drop the speed down to 1,100rpm / 11.8 knots, and the fuel flow drops to 89lt per hour – that's good enough to get from the Gold Coast to Sydney and back with 10% fuel left in the tanks. At an 8 knot troll speed, she uses only 225lt per hour in total. The boat planed in 8.6 seconds at 30 knots.

All the driving is done from the forward-mounted helm station on the enclosed flybridge. It doesn't have the best view of the cockpit, so a second station has been positioned on the overhang above the mezzanine. For its size, the boat is very nimble and backs up hard - so hard that in a swell it will take water over the transom. However, there's no danger of filling the cockpit - a big drain right across the back takes the water away in seconds.

Although the 550 was first intended to be a battlewagon to chase the big fish, it has proved very popular, with many prospective owners just liking its looks and performance. They have placed orders for the convertible version without all the fishing gear. There is a rumour that a waiting list of some 20 buyers exists after the Sydney Boat Show.

And now, the big wake-up call for the industry ...the base boat comes in at around A\$1.6m and as tested at A\$1.9m. That's way under what you would pay for one of its rivals – local or imported. 🇺🇸

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Performance:

In relatively calm conditions off the Gold Coast Seaway the 550 returned the following performance figures:

	RPM	KNOTS	LPH	NM Range	L.P.N.M
1	700	7.3	23	1543	3.15
2	900	8.8	31	1380	3.52
3	1100	10.3	48	1043	4.66
4	1300	11.7	79	720	6.75
5	1500	14.9	103	703	6.91
6	1700	18.9	130	707	6.88
7	1900	22.9	169	659	7.38
8	2100	26.8	204	638	7.61
9	2300	30.4	239	618	7.86
10	2348	31	258	584	8

