

# Longer is better !



**For professional charter operators on Cape York, this big long boat is about to take much of the sting out of fuel bills.**

**Ron Calcutt reports:**

**IN HIS** January/ February 1998 Editorial. our editor suggested that he might need to head back to Cape York to check out a new Stinger Long Boat his guides were ordering. Knowing how much Jam hates to travel to exotic destinations, I got hold of that boat before it left Brisbane so he wouldn't have to subject himself to that hardship. It's really good to have mates like me.

These days long boats are steadily gaining acceptance in the guided fishing industry, and that is happening for a number of reasons. Funny as they might look with their banana shape and over-the-top length to beam ratio, the long boats are surprisingly good sea boats, and at the same time can float over a patch of damp sand.

Cape York fishing guides Gary Wright and Ian McConnell cater for all sorts of sport fishing, but find themselves guiding more and more for saltwater fly rodders these days. The boat as you see it here still had some gear to go onto it when delivered, including a poling platform on the command station at the stern. and a bunch of special rod holders that would slot into the uprights used in the side rails.

Although this one has been set up as a professional guide boat. there are lots of elements here that apply equally to sport fishing enthusiasts.

## LAYOUT

The Stinger 723 is 7. 10 x 1.86m, with an insignificant draft of just 0.18m. You can easily break this boat up into the simple part and the complicated part. The simple part is the greater portion of the boat that has been given over to work space. The complicated part is the command station at the back that also houses most of the bulk storage.

Let's deal with the easy bit first. Without having to use up much boat space at all, the foredeck is reasonably large and houses a good rope locker and another storage space that can gobble up lots of wet Weather gear and the like.

Something I like about these boat is that they have a 'lot of flotation material packed in under the coamings which helps to keep a swamped boat floating. The entire work area is devoid of fittings other than four central boxes on which swivel seats have been mounted for the passengers. The under seat storage houses life jackets. A viable option here would be to run a bench style seat down the centre over a low profile Fish/ice box. You could also have the whole space completely clear.

When I first looked at the helm setup over that great bridge type affair aft I figured you could develop some sensations of insecurity perched up there but later in some fairly substantial swells I admit to wondering why I hadn't thought of a beaut idea like this myself - it's just great !

The helm is pretty basic with just the standard engine gauges, a compass and room to mount a sounder. The skipper has some storage under for personal gear, but there's nothing flash about it.

Naturally, all that space contained in the bridge structure has been put to maximum use as a big live well and a fish box that can hold bigger fish than 1 ever catch There's also space for fuel and batteries and if the live well is not being used as a live well. it also acts as a bulk storage area.

The hull self drains through non return ball scuppers and also has over-sized bungs plus large overflows for the live bait system.

Boats don't get much simpler than this, yet this craft does everything required of it and remains a very clean and clear fishing platform for serious operators.

## PERFORMANCE

The choice of a 50hp Yarnaha fourstroke caused the potential owner to have one or two restless nights. He understood the theory of long boat hull design and that a small motor should work well, but it still feels pretty funny telling a builder to put a 50hp engine on the back of a 7.10m boat.

It feels a bit funny the first time you drive this rig. After a million and one outboard rides in conventional hulls where you plant the power and blow the hull out of the hole, you do the same thing with this boat and it just surges quietly forward not very fast at all. The thing is that it keeps on surging and gathering speed, and in no time at all you are backing off to find your cruising rev range

The power range for this hull is 40-90hp but I couldn't imagine having anything better on the back than the 50hp Yammie fitted to this boat. Ultra quiet, incredibly smooth and delivering a top cruise of 24 knots at 5500rpm I found it very comfortable at 4000-4500.

We had four men on the boat for the test run and the 50 lifted this load out of the hole comfortably. Or perhaps it is not entirely correct to talk about coming out of the hole with this hull. It is more of a gradual flat rise, as you go forward. That four-stroke loads up for a bit as it works the hull up to speed, then you simply feel the friction let go and the boat takes off .



Contact: Murray Hallam, Stinger Boats on (07) 3200 0272.

The underside of the boat sports unusually pronounced strakes starting at the stem and running the full length of the hull. I can believe the builder's claim that those trap air which lubricates the hull and reduces friction. **The boat feels as if it is doing things very easily.**

We picked a dandy little day to run this boat, with heavy rain and lots of squalls about. It was not the sort of day you'd choose to go outside fishing, and out of respect for those wearing clothes they would have to work in for the rest of the day I settled for a quiet potter just off the entrance rather than push the envelope and take the inevitable saltwater shower this would involve.

Long boats cause people to wonder if they will be able to rise into steep seas and run true ahead of following seas. I was impressed with the way this hull rose into some reasonably ugly wind swells. and when I backed the power off and left it sitting deep in the same area it just bobbed around like a cork. The strakes come into play downhill to give this boat excellent directional stability.

A self drainer with good capacity to clear water through non-return ball scuppers backed up by bilge pumps, I would have felt quite comfortable about taking this boat for a long run in rough water. I liked the high driving position, and I have to say that the boat had been beautifully set up with a feather light helm and excellent gear shift and throttle control.

This is a particularly versatile boat. It can ghost around in very shallow water without a problem, then head off out to sea and handle dismal conditions. I can tell you you won't need all of your five fingers to count up the number of hulls around that could do that !