

# Kingcat 180

Contributed by Erwin Bursik  
Friday, 23 June 2006  
Last Updated Wednesday, 08 November 2006

## Boat Test - Kingcat 180

Tested by Erwin Bursik

### AT A GLANCE

Length: 5,55 metres

Beam: 2, 5 metres

Hull Weight: 620 kg

Weight on trailer: 1 600 kg

Construction: GRP with balsa-core deck, marine ply transom and GRP bulkheads that have been foam-filled.

Flotation: In addition to foam-filled bulkheads, sealed plastic bottles in 24 separate compartments.

Cockpit length: 3,0 metres

Lowest cockpit freeboard: 450 mm    Rated max hp:    2 x 100 hp

Power as tested: 2 x 90 hp

No sooner had the first of Peter Motzouri's new models been completed for her owner, ready to go to sea, than I found myself at the Richards Bay slipway, ready to put her through her paces.

Z-Crafts has been building boats for 32 years and has a formidable reputation in the boating industry in South Africa. They have produced in excess of 7 000 craft during this time including more than 600 16ft Invaders and 200 Cougar 180s.

Recently the ownership structure of Z-Craft changed, with Peter Motzouris taking over the business for his own account. After much soul searching and infrastructural reconstruction, the new Z-Craft is lean, mean and very hungry to re-enforce its position in the marine industry in South Africa, at the same time tackling the export market as well.

Whilst retaining the Empangeni factory as just that - a factory and with a new retail shop in Empangeni and a branch in Cape Town, Z-Craft is poised for an even greater assault on the South African Boating market. SKI BOAT wishes Peter and Marilyn Motzouris and all their handpicked staff the success they richly deserve from all the effort they have put in to Z-Craft.

### GENERAL IMPRESSION

I was intrigued when Peter began to advertise the King Cat in its "wrapped" form in the previous issue of SKI BOAT. A lot of phone calls came through to me waiting to know if knew anything about the King Cat, but of course I did not know Peter teaser ad had the people talking and had me wondering what his new baby was all about. The first glance I had of her was when I arrived at the Meerensee Boat Club at Richards Bay and she was parked on the hard near the slipway. Peter has combined his knowledge skills and requirements with those of Brett King, who must rank as one of the finest surf skippers in South Africa, to produce an 18ft that has it in respect of surf handling capabilities. Besides that, It was required that she performed at sea under all conditions to making her a fishing machine work of note.

Brett King has been seen at numerous venues all along our coast demonstrating what the Z-Craft Cat do in the surf, and it is fitting that his expertise is has now been acknowledge in the naming of this brand new craft the King Cat 180.

## CONDITIONS FOR TEST

A very cold with a gale-force south-westerly ripped through Natal Coast at the end of July.

I will give one guess which date the boat test was originally planned. When the sun came out I rushed to Richards Bay and took the King Cat to sea. The wind had swung from the south west to blow moderate north easterly and this over a big swell left behind by the westerly. I couldn't have asked for the better conditions for the test.

## LAUNCHING AND TRAILERING

Z-Craft have paid lots of school fees over the years of developing the trailers that work, trailers that tow well, trailers that don't fall to pieces, on the rough roads and the and trailers that are reasonably priced for the service they are expected to give.

It was therefore little wonder that the trailer carrying the King Cat was of this standard design, the only modification being the transom step to enable crew easy access, and the tail chevron board configuration.

Launching was exceptionally easy on the practical slipway of the Meerensee Club which is perfectly angled for small craft. After the test, I rode the craft back up onto the trailer without hesitation and at the first attempt- the simplest of manoeuvres. Within minutes she was hitched up and in the time it took me to switch off the motors which were holding the craft in position and trim them up, she was hitched up and we were out of the water and in the parking lot.

## Motors and Controls

Twin 90hp Yamahas with trim -tilts had been installed on the craft and as they had already done some hours at sea, I had no reservations about working them and the craft to maximum.

They ran very sweetly on the power when required and just as quickly as to the throttle when power needed to be reduced.

Swinging 17-pitch props, I was unable to achieve maximum revs of the sea but in the flat water of the bay her speed was awesome Even on one motor, with the other dragging, I was able to get her on the plane while running into the sea. Just think about that. Indeed, I was surprised, as was Brett King who was with me during the test. Peter had fitted the Sea Star hydraulic system that was smooth and light to operate through all facets of the sea trials, especially when pulling her out of a very tight turn into an oncoming wave. With the trim-tilts I was able to experience the full range of this craft's performance aided by the digital trim gauge which allowed me to accurately relate trim position to performance.

## HANDLING

It took me but a few moments after she had got onto the plane in the flat water of Richards Bay harbour to assess her planing profile. We were running just in front of her on the old faithful Invader 16 that was to be used as the photographer's boat. The lifting strake configuration in the bow area not only supplied added lift but tended to froze water down and aft in the tunnel. After having watched her for some considerable time, it was pleasing to note just how this visual analysis translated into feel when I got behind the wheel of the King Cat 180 and started to put her through her paces.

Whilst the craft is somewhat similar to the highly acclaimed Cougar Cat, she feels quite different when performing at the sea. The King Cat has what can be described as more bow buoyancy. This provides more lift and gives the impression

that she is bigger in the shoulders- the attack area- of the craft. I found this perceived approach angle very important because when we put her into the simulated surf conditions, I was able to use this feature to adjust the angle at which she faced oncoming waves.

I could then determine whether I wanted her to dig in or fly over the top by adjusting the seesaw pivot position with the motor trims. Her bow buoyancy seemed to move the axis (seesaw) point to a position I felt was just below the where I was standing at the helm.

I have always believed that bigger crafts - cats in particular- react with less sensitivity to motor trims. Whilst I still hold onto this belief, I found that the King Cat reacted very quickly to a change in motor trim angle.

As an example, during a long run up the coast into the north easterly that was just starting to blow, so that I had wind and surface chop on the starboard bow, I was able to vary revs by as much as 700rpm by merely adjustment trims and without touching the throttle settings.

This sweet planing angle not only maximises the speed and saves fuel, but also provides the most comfortable ride over a long distance.

As this was Brett King's first ride on the boat he helped design, It was a pleasure to watch his face as he experienced the way his baby performed. Those who know Brett will be aware of his unassuming manner and that he is not over-talkative. Therefore I was not expecting him to rave about the craft or try to sell this boat's performance.

However, his expression said a thousand words, summarised in, "Yes, I am very pleased that she is doing everything I expected from her.

Running back down the coast with the wind and over the big swell that was coming in from the south east, she rode beautifully. So often with sharp bowed craft, there is a tendency to drop a sponson in following sea.

When badly trimmed I could force the King Cat to do just that but when trimmed properly she never gave the slightest indication of that problem even during the six kilometre run .

Talking trim it must be realised, especially with a high - speed planing cat- that if the water is taken out from under one sponson. One cannot expect the sponson to take on flying characteristics, especially if the other is being buffeted by the water. However despite the many holes in the sea in which we tested the King Cat, her performance throughout was superb.