

Invader 220

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Boat Test - Invader 220

Tested by Erwin Bursik

AT A GLANCE
Length:
Beam:
Hull Weight:
Weight on trailer:
Construction:

Flotation:
 Cockpit length:
 Lowest cockpit freeboard:
 Rated max hp:
 Power as tested:

Innovation must be surely lie at the heart of man. Year-by-year, if not month-by-month, new products replace those of yesterday and yesteryear. No products ever hangs onto the tag of being "the best" as, no sooner is that tag attached than a new model, new idea, new concept changes that status.

Z-Craft's Peter Motzouris is doing just that - rethinking his range of craft and combining the positive features of the yesteryears very successful models with new design features, incorporating modern techniques and new ideas, as well as meeting current demands. The result is a deep sea craft for a new millennium - Y2k in a different sense.

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

The Invader 220 is Z-Craft's latest boat to be launched - a craft that epitomises the philosophy of Z-Crafts and, more particularly, that of Peter Motzouris. It,s a philosophy that dictates he provide his clients with craft that will fulfil not only the their current requirements, but will provide the them with enjoyable boating for at least a decade to come.

Denham Townsend, chairman of Nomands Gamefishing Club, and Warren Meredith wanted a craft. They needed a boat capable of fishing comfortable for big marlin, yet still practically enough for light tackle game fishing with the family. With Sodwana and Shelly Beach as prime launch sites, a sportfisher-type craft was excluded from the equation and a large ski-boat seemed to be required. However, Denham and Warren wanted - in fact, stipulated - that the craft was needed to have the facilities and finishing of a sportfisher.

This was just the incentive Peter needed to redesign the Invader 220. Many of his client's requirements and ideas, together with his vast experience of boat design, building and fishing have resulted in the new Invader 220 being a sportfishing craft of note. I hesitate to call this boat a "ski boat", for it quite a bit more, let alone bigger than what we in South Africa have come to class as a ski-boat. It is for this reason we decided to review the craft rather than test her within the parameters that I use for normal ski boat testing.

Prior to the review, I had learned quite a bit about the new craft being built for Nomads' Bossman - all via the grapevine. It was therefore no surprise when Peter contacted me to say the craft had been put through to her sea trials of Shelly beach. Denham and Warren had agreed on to let me play with their new craft while it was still at the coast.

VENUE AND CONDITIONS

Richards Bay was the decided venue for the trials, for two major reasons. The first was that there is a good slipway at the Meerensee Boat Club, and secondly there is sufficient flat water in the bay if the wicked winter winds precluded a full range of trials out at sea.

I n hindsight we were spot on, for the sea conditions on the day of the review were far from pleasant. A strong north-easterly had blown all night and left nasty chop on the water. The unpleasant conditions were worsened by a strong land breeze that was blowing that morning. I initially headed out to the sea on a large cat which we were using as a photography boat. So, when I boarded the Invader 220 after my photography stint, I was able to make a direct comparison between the rides the two craft offered.

It was not a nice sea. The fact that no other boats were at the sea - not even the command fleet - substantiates this statement! Many say that to really test a craft you have to take it into the big seas. I do not really agree, but when I combined the crafts performance in the ugly stuff and then in the calmer water of the bay, I got a fairly good idea of what the boat can do. After photographing her I made a fairly hairy crossing from boat to boat, and for the first time took over the controls.

MOTORS AND CONTROLS

What do most deep sea anglers do when they exit the breakwaters of Richards Bay? They go north, so north I went. I set the craft's trim and throttles to achieve a ride that I considered to be comfortable enough to allow any crew and the boat to arrive at Mapelane lighthouse in one piece and still be fit enough to enjoy a day's fishing.

After I was satisfied that we were getting the best ride from the invader 220, I glanced at the speed 15 to 17mph it showed. Surprised? Indeed, I was, as when I was on the bigger craft running the same course we were also only achieving that sort of speed. About five kilometers had satisfied myself that he Invader 220 could indeed sustain the run - and so could the crew. After trying her into the sea, I turned her to get the prevailing sea on the starboard bow. She immediately responded, picking up speed to 25mph and a much smoother ride.

I was still questioning the effects of the canopy, so I requested that Peter and Aubrey refurl it into its tied -down position to see if there was any difference. Indeed, there was. While not wanting to rehash the views I expressed so strongly in the boat test in the previous issue of SKI-BOAT, I must reiterate that the added lift the extended canopy provided did not enhance her ride. She rode the better without it.

HANDLING

During the full range trials I did it at sea - yes, in the rough stuff - she performed exceedingly well. The killer speed - kona trolling speed - is not liked by most craft under the 30ft. The Invader 220 was not all that happy in the sea we experienced, but she could maintain the troll into the sea. When most other Ski-Boats would rather have turned for home base and trolled at beam sea pattern. All I found during the exercise was that the ride was a bit bumpy and there was an additional bit of spray.

As she is designed primarily for marlin fishing, I did a number of reversing trials with her. I was surprised at how well the craft responded to tight reverse turns and how little water she pushed up into the motor well. Only when I reversed relatively quickly into the sea did I get her to take water over the high transform onto the deck.

Note: When reversing all outboard-powered craft, remember to tilt the motors up quite a bit to avoid the props drgging the transform downwards. Also, always keep both motors running so as not to force water up the exhaust system into the crank case.

On the way back to Richards Bay she rode extremely well, really enjoying the following sea. After trimming to account for the torque of the motors, she performed exceedingly well and did not puff and spray, even when cresting a wave and racing down in front of it.

Talking of trim, the Invader 220 responds surprisingly very well to motor trims for a craft her size. We noticed this both in the flat water as well as in the rough stuff. It's only the when the craft is really flying that the trim has little effect and she reverts to the natural hull design to provide a very pleasant ride.

Denwa -One (as she has been christened) has been fitted with the major a pair of V4 115hp Yamaha motors which opinion, are perfectly suited to the craft.

During the full spectrum of tests, they performed beautifully and supplied more than sufficient power for the invader 220. With a crew of three and one motor lifted the other (port or starboard) planed the craft relatively easily. Even with a motor trailing she did eventually get onto the plane, but it took about 150 meters. The state of the art hydraulic steering system deleted for Denwa -One is superb - one of the best I have tried. It proved positive and very smooth during operations, including turning this big craft in tight situations. Where does one start in doing the justice to the top deck design and internal layout? Firstly, her overall styling makes her a very nice looking craft indeed. When one takes a closer look at what's been incorporating into the layout design, I for one was not only impressed but astounded.

Furthermore, I must compliment Peter and his staff at Z-Craft for the vast improvement and quality and standard of finish that he has achieved in the last couple of craft I have seen emanating from this factory.

As Denwa - One is primarily for marlin fishing, she has been rigged almost exclusively for that purpose. The fighting chair is substantial and mounted on a very cleverly designed aft hatch with sides that lift up like many an old-fashioned motor car's bonnet. This provides access to three fuel cans per side, together with the fuel filters - all accessible even while an angler is in the fighting chair. Fuel change - over switches are located on the aft of the panel of the hatch. Additional fuel can also be carried into forward underdeck hatches. Located in the aft of each sponson is a reasonably long fish hatch with flush deck hatch covers.

An above deck livebait well has been incorporated into the port side of the false transform and is fed a high volume of 12 volt pump which can also be coupled to wash down hose. The front panel of this is well transparent perspex, so the crew will have no if the livebait die, and no opportunity to say "I couldn't see as we were traveling too fast."

It is, however, the forward console area that really captivated my attention. The skipper's - area where all the controls and instrumentation are fitted - is not only practically designed but is very comfortable and provides easy viewing of all the instruments which we are housed in a concave styled dash. Remodelled tackle and accessory cupboards are a big improvement. - not only looking very nice but positioned for ease of access. A central cupboard which houses many Plano tackle boxes is also a good idea: one can merely replace the some or all of the see through plastic boxes, depending on the type of fishing that one intends doing.

Access to the front cabin / stowage area is via removable hinged door that can be stowed up front if not required during the a day at sea. Just aft and neatly tucked under the port forward gunnel is a bait complete with washbasin with pumped fresh water.

LAUNCHING AND TRAILERING

Denwa - One is trailed on a very substantial galvanised trailer with double LA Axles, and with the new effective braking system that comes standard with these axles, she tows extremely well. Peter towed this very big rig with his 4x4 Nissan double cab and launched and retrieved the boat on the slipway without the any undue effort. Denham, however, is wearing belt and braces and has opted for one of big Chev 4x4s as a tow vehicle.

A week after the test I followed Denham and Warren for a considerable distances as they bypassed Durban. The rig seemed to tow beautifully and they maintained a speed around 110km/h. During the first week of testing and fishing with his new craft at Shelly Beach, Denham told me he launched and retrieved craft with only his two sons helping him. This says something for the equipment and the way it works.

CONCLUSION

The Invader 220 is quite a craft and whilst born and bred for the short seas off the Natal Coast, her basic hull design has had enough years of proven acceptance along the South east of Cape and the big seas off Cape Town to convince me she will be just as much at home in those waters. And in her new modernised guise, she should prove all the more irresistible to deep sea angling devotees throughout the country.