

Kingcat 2206

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Boat Test - KingCat 2206 Sport – A 6,9m craft by Z-Craft (July/August 2003)

Tested by Erwin Bursik

AT A GLANCE

PETER Motzouris knows what he wants when it comes to designing and building a boat for himself. As a result, into his new KingCat 226 went a number of ideas and concepts that are, to a degree, extremely novel and innovative.

It's certainly easier for a boat manufacturer to try out innovations on his own craft than to impose new concepts on a prospective buyer who, in addition to probably being sceptical, often has ideas of his own. Under these circumstances compromise does not always result in new thinking, though it usually produces the required result.

"It's my boat, built to suit me and to provide me with what I require for my kind of fishing," said Peter — and so the KingCat 226 Sport Centre Console was born.

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

"She's big, she's sporty and she looks magnificent, and whether she's on the water, on the beach or being towed on the road, she is guaranteed to turn heads.

"I wanted a craft that was primarily a light tackle offshore fishing boat for my son, his friends and my friends to enjoy," said Peter. "But, come marlin season I need a craft that will fish seriously with the best and for the biggest. The KingCat 226 Sport provides all I need and fulfils all my desires."

CONDITIONS FOR TEST

Put simply, so as not to bore those who read the test on the Kingcat 200 which appeared in the previous issue of SKI-BOAT, the remnants of a 48 hour north-easter had calmed down to about 15 knots, and a reasonably big cyclonic swell helped make the sea interesting.

Much of the photography was undertaken within the areas adjacent to the main channel in Richards Bay harbour, and by the time it was the KingCat 226's turn to parade for the camera, the north-easterly was pushing up a fair chop in these otherwise protected waters. It was just enough to allow the hull to really work well, yet not be thwarted by excessive sea movements.

LAUNCHING AND TRAILERING

With a craft of this size Peter recommends a twin-axled trailer and has elected to use two LA Axles for his own boat's trailer.

At first glance, the trailer looked fairly standard with breakneck facilities to assist launching and retrieval during beach launching. It's a good, sturdy trailer, I thought, but somehow it looked different. On closer inspection I eventually saw the dramatic change in engineering design.

The pivot for the "breaknecking" of the trailer bed has been moved to behind the rear trailer wheels, thereby allowing the bogie holding the wheels, axles and suspension to remain in their towing position. Other double-axled trailers pivot ahead of the front axle while retrieving and, to a degree, launching puts undue strain on the aft wheels and axle.

Indeed, it's the result of some lateral thinking by Pete, and it apparently works extremely well. However, I can't comment personally as my only experience with it was simply running the KingCat 226 up onto her trailer on the Richards Bay Yacht Club's slipway.

MOTORS AND CONTROLS

Twin 100hp Yamaha four-stroke motors power the KingCat 226, and they did an amazing job of powering her through the rigours of the tests I put this craft through. Brett King also put this power to good use when bringing the KingCat 226 to life for the camera.

Any doubts I still had about four-stroke performance not being comparable to two-stroke are now gone. Although I have not done direct, comparative tests on same hp, same hull, in same conditions, I perceive the performance produced under general offshore boating/fishing conditions to be virtually the same.

What makes the Yamaha 4-strokes such a pleasure to operate is their smoothness during power application, the maintenance of throttle setting, the constant torque during rough water traversing, and the lack of engine noise. Let's also not forget their low fuel usage, but the only way I know of experiencing this benefit is lack of weight loss in one's wallet.

The hydraulic steering and motor controls were smooth throughout all aspects of the craft's performance during the tests. An Auto Pitch has also been fitted — a luxury that is very useful during long hours of trolling.

HANDLING

I use the words "lively" and "sporty" loosely, because the visual impact of the craft at sea has as much to do with her perceived performance as actually riding her oneself. Her length and her overall sleek look, when added to speed-over-water and spray billowing out behind her, all combine to present a picture of a very sporty-looking craft boasting both speed and performance.

Even once I was behind the controls of the KingCat 226 and had covered a good few kilometres of ocean, these impressions did not change. Perhaps, to be more precise, my original impressions were a bit conservative, because while she certainly had the alacrity and feel of a speedster, she also provides the security and stability one comes to expect from big ski-boats.

When Brett and I first climbed aboard the craft at sea — no mean feat in that upside-down ocean — I set a course that had me travelling parallel to the coast with the sea on the starboard bow quarter.

Settling in at about 3 500 revs had us averaging a SOS of about 17 knots, and having trimmed the craft to my liking, we rode very comfortably considering the sea conditions.

The Kingcat 226 is a big boat with high sides, a large centre console as well as other hatches, a fighting chair and — from the skipping position — a vast piece of boat ahead of one. She gives one not only a sense of

size, but also the stability and protection that goes with it. As a result, skipping this craft gives one a feeling power and of being in control of a boat much bigger than her 6,9 metres.

Before pushing her into a head sea I ran her diagonally in towards the shoreline, tracking the swell direction which meant the wind was virtually hitting us broadside on. Using a little starboard motor “up” trim to hold the starboard sponson firmly in the water, I increased speed in order to establish how the hull reacted to the sea with continuing added power and therefore speed. It’s hard to describe, other than that she seemed to free herself from the water and fly across its surface. What’s more, any wind-driven spray fell far aft.

While in the area of shallower water and a more pronounced swell, I played around with her, executing sharp turns and quick take-offs. Brett told me he had used the craft in big surf at Sodwana and was extremely happy with her capabilities, and so was I. I found she turned surprisingly well considering her 6,9 metres and heavy shoulders that have to be made to do an about-turn in virtually her own length. What really surprised me was the performance I was able to extract from her coming out of the turn. The twin 100 four-strokes certainly produced the required torque.

Taking the sea head-on necessitated adjusting her trim quite a bit until I got her to a stage where she was riding in a very prone position to maximise comfort. To achieve this I had to sacrifice dryness. From being completely dry to feeling the odd puff of spray was worth it to achieve a good, comfortable and sustainable running speed.

This craft loves a following sea. She rode beautifully all the way back from up north to the harbour entrance .

To me, if one wants to enjoy the experience, protection in inclement weather, whilst travelling at marlin kona speed for hours on end, is a necessity. Normally this is the downside of a centre console ski-boat. With the KingCat 226 I set her at an SOG of 8/9 knots and we did many kilometres on all bearings while Brett and I discussed the craft’s merits and demerits. It was enjoyable, and we only had to duck very occasionally to avoid a puff of spray.

She also backs up well and was quite manoeuvrable during this exercise.

DECK LAYOUT

It is in this area that Peter has really excelled, for not only has he developed a number of nice-to-have-features on this craft, but he has also incorporated them in style so that they do not detract from the craft’s appearance and finish.

An example of this is the two Luna Tubes. They are located in the false transom and I didn’t notice them until I was shown this feature.

The centre console itself is a work of art — not only stylish, but also well designed to make it very user-friendly for the skipper and first mate. On its forward side is an upholstered seat that is hinged forward for easy access to stowage and all the craft’s electrics. Aft of the console is an above-deck hatch with a padded “bum seat” for the skipper. It’s all very comfortable and practical, in my experience.

Aft of this was mounted Z-Craft’s latest model fighting chair — big, robust and well positioned.

I chirped Pete about the height above deck of the very substantial T-top which incorporates a long line of rocket launcher-style rod holders, after I had bumped my head a few times. “The boat is mine,” he retorted. “Being a shorty I’m tired of climbing on hatches to get rods out of the rocket launchers, so I styled these for my very own practical use.”

On this craft there is no shortage of cupboards and hatches, again to comply with Peter’s belief that tackle boxes, bait boxes and lunch boxes are a nuisance on a boat and always get in the way. There are more than enough specially designed hatches and drawers for all these on the KingCat 226, and the deck remains clear and uncluttered.

The big cockpit area forward of the centre console is neatly and cleverly laid out to provide access to tackle drawers, etc.,

but also provides a comfortable seating area in which to relax if the fishing is quiet or during a quiet sundowner cruise on the bay.

FINISH

“Outstanding” came to mind, but then the fact that it was the boss’s boat made me study and reassess her even further.

In summation, yes, it was Peter’s boat to which he has added all the niceties one could ask for, so naturally the impression she first made was very powerful.

However, the more I delved, the more I looked, the more I pulled out drawers and opened cupboards, the more it struck me that beneath the fancy extras was a solid, well- and neatly constructed craft.

The amount of thought that had gone into the hull and top deck moulds must have been enormous, and its execution is of a very high standard.

Another close inspection of the hardware (made and fitted), as well as instrumentation, steering and controls, showed a high degree of workmanship.

Indeed, the KingCat 226 is a craft even the most fastidious buyer would have difficulty finding fault with.

CONCLUSION

The KingCat 226 is a craft with a difference, and thought, time and effort were obviously not spared during its manufacture. Having been made for the manufacturer’s “Boss Man” will also give her a lot of appeal in the market place. Despite this, Pete has so far avoided what has become the lot of a many a boat builder — selling his personalised craft — even though many have tried to twist his arm.

Oh yes, the KingCat 226 Sport Centre Console is quite a craft!