

# F16

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## Boat Test - F16

Tested Erwin Bursik

### AT A GLANCE

Length: 4,92m

Beam: 2,2m

Hull Weight: 410kg

Weight on trailer: 960kg

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

Flotation: Bottles/foam

Cockpit length: 3,0 metres

Lowest cockpit freeboard: 450 mm

Rated max hp: 2 x 60hp

Power as tested: 2 x 50hp Yamaha 4-stroke motors

PETER Motzouris lives boats. If he's not designing and building new models to add to his range of offshore craft, he is upgrading existing models to ensure they look and behave like current generation craft should.

To keep Peter on his toes, his son Dustin has been working closely with him this year. Dustin, who achieved world champion status during the nine years he raced jet skis professionally in the USA and Japan, was born into a boating world, achieved fame in it, and now he intends making his mark at

Z-Craft. In fact, Dustin has become so involved with the F16 both in design and manufacture that it has become his baby. And a damn fine craft it has turned out to be too!

### GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

As usual, Peter kept me informed throughout the gestation period of the F16, but I only first set eyes on her at the recent National Boat Show, held in Johannesburg in August.

There she lay amongst dozens of other craft, and although dwarfed by some much larger craft, she stood proud, with the Z-Craft lineage coming through strongly in her lines and layout. She also boasted a very striking, sporty look that

I have since discovered is Dustin's influence.

This craft, categorised by Peter as an entry-level craft to the world of offshore boating, has ended up much more than that and will prove to be a mean fishing machine in her size range.

### CONDITIONS FOR TEST

Spring had sprung &hellip;. or had it? Waiting for a window of good weather &mdash; or at least sunshine &mdash; took seven days, with howling south-westerlies and snow everywhere from &rsquo;Maritzburg to the mountains, not to mention dark, rain-filled clouds over the coast. I sat glued to in an endeavour to find a gap in the long term forecast.

It's a brilliant website, with both radar and satellite images that virtually update as one is looking at it. And I found a gap in the weather! I raced to Richards Bay and found bright sunshine, but with a strong westerly land breeze over a choppy, mushy sea over a huge swell. For a small craft, conditions like these would be a baptism of fire.

### LAUNCHING AND TRAILERING

Peter and Dustin decided that the F16, whilst being &ldquo;entry-level&rdquo; &mdash; a description determined by price alone &mdash; had to be a real ski-boat. She had to be a craft that newcomers to the game and first-time boat owners could not only be proud of, but could also fish from practically and safely if caught in a big sea.

What's more, the trailer also had to be right, built strong enough with tough suspension and good brakes to ensure that it would survive many trips into Moçambique. &ldquo;I don't want a newie to the sport to learn the hard way,&rdquo; said Peter, so he built the trailer good and solid. When I watched the rig being towed at good speed behind Dustin's 4x4 on the way back from Richards Bay to Z-Craft in Empangeni, she appeared to tow perfectly.

Further proof of the quality and good design of this trailer was obvious when launching and retrieving the F16 at the Richards Bay slipway. It was as easy as it gets. Peter has built enough launching rigs to know what a trailer is required to do on the beach, and I have no doubt this rig will perform just as beautifully there too.

### MOTORS AND CONTROLS

Peter had fitted a pair of 50hp Yamaha 4-stroke motors to the F16 for the show, because that's what he had in stock, but these are hardly entry-level motors. According to Peter, the craft is actually designed to take 40hp or 50hp Yamaha 2-stroke motors.

Not only would the 2-stroke models be a lot lighter and cost a lot less, but they would also provide a little bit more torque during out-the-hole take-off, especially if the craft needed to perform on one motor only.

It was, however, a treat to play with the Yamaha 4-stroke motors as it gave me a chance to feel how well these motors ran and performed. True to Yamaha's word, they were quiet, started instantly and had very smooth acceleration throughout the power curve with both motors running in tandem.

Yamaha controls had also been fitted, and the standard control box that hasn't changed in years worked well, though one was smooth and even, while the other was a little stiff and needed adjustment. The steering &mdash; both mechanically and position-wise &mdash; was perfect.

For a craft of this size, the centre console helm station was both comfortable and visually pleasing. It offers an aft bum seat for calm weather operation and has sufficient support for one to brace oneself and get protection when standing in the really heavy stuff. The steering and throttle controls are well positioned, and the instrumentation is clearly visible.

### HANDLING

Almost every time I exit Richards Bay harbour, the current and churn created where bay meets ocean has a radical effect on the craft's hull.

As I was running the F16 through a particularly churned up harbour entrance and this small craft was being affected by these currents, I battled to gain a proper impression of the craft's performance. It was only when I got at least a kilometre out to sea that a fairly consistent sea action began to prevail and I could relax and start to feel the craft.

The hull design of the F16 originates from the Invader 16, a craft that was both highly successful and very popular in the 1980s and 1990s. Peter has heightened the tunnel to reduce hydraulic action. Then he softened the chine

which has the effect of making entry softer, thus making for a much softer ride.

As I know the Invader 16 extremely well, I was very keen to see how the theory relating to these changes would translate into the F16's eventual performance at sea. And, yes, the Motzourises have got it right, but I will expand on these aspects later.

In the "getting to know you" stage of my time on the F16, I set course up the coast, not too far off from the backline. I chose this because the westerly/land breeze was really blowing hard. Additionally, the chop it produced got bigger and bigger the further out one ventured. This was especially so where it mixed with the chopped sea and big swell the strong westerly has blown up during the preceding 48 hours.

Sitting at just under 4 000 rpm, we made excellent progress up the coast with the side sea not affecting the craft's lateral stability all that much and, above all, keeping the wind-driven spray off us.

It was during this run that I was able to get Dustin to move from his comfortable seat — located in the front of the console — to stand next to me. In this way I'd be able to find the craft's "sweet spot" by moving him forward and aft.

The change in the F16's ride was immediately evident, and the best position turned out to be with him standing on the starboard side right next to me. This exercise helped me prove that the F16 is indeed softer, with little or no hydraulic thumping in the tunnel. Indeed, she seemed to track a lot more evenly than the Invader 16. The only time I experienced thumping in the tunnel was when I deliberately tried to bring it on by going into a big chop head-on and at excessive speed.

Again, taking overall size into consideration, I swung to starboard and ran with the wind, across the south-westerly sea to deep water, to see how she would handle the rougher conditions.

The conditions out deep were, in my opinion, marginally fishable — if you're competition fishing for wealth rather than pleasure — and the F16 was put through a range of speeds from lure pulling to slow troll on one motor, as well as drifting.

I was very happy with the way this relatively small craft performed in all these tests, without becoming uncomfortable or, above all, wet. Yes, the odd bit of wind spray was experienced, but then I was daring her to wet me. Indeed, I certainly could have fished in a manner which would have kept me bone dry.

On the drift I found her stable, with no water washing over the false transom, even when Dustin and I moved far aft, bearing in mind the extra weight of the 4-stroke motors.

The way in which the two of us walked around the deck as if fighting a double-up on "coda" proved just how much practical deck space there is on this craft. Even for a big guy like me, passing the centre console from stern to bow was easy, without having to worry about falling overboard or clutching onto grab rails with one hand to make the pass.

Running back towards Richards Bay with the wind on the starboard bow quarter and the sea and swell on the opposite quarter made for an interesting ride. We threw lots of spray aft, yet were able to push very fast speeds without being uncomfortable.

With the big swells on the transom — and even though the wind was head on — she held her line well with no tendency to yaw in the steep sea.

Once we were almost in the back line I put her through simulated surf conditions. She turns extremely lightly, with no sign of cavitation, and was very quick out of the hole. Interestingly, I found turning her a lot easier using hard to starboard than to port, which is my natural preference, being right-handed, and also turning with the prop rotation instead of against it.

On one motor she was sluggish. I believe I would have got better performance out of her with one 40hp 2-stroke motor. It will be interesting to gauge this aspect of her performance when the first F16 powered by twin 40hp Yamaha 2-strokes gets into the water.

## DECK LAYOUT

Saying that she's styled as an entry-level craft is, to me, a misnomer, as this suggests that she's simple and basic. The F16 is way beyond that. Not only has the F16 got all the same styling, finishes and fittings, hatch consoles, cupboards and stainless-steel accessories as the bigger craft in the Z-Craft stable, but they're also of the same quality.

Dustin has, however, redesigned aspects of the top deck moulding that, in essence, simplify the construction while still incorporating virtually all of the niceties we expect on a craft of this size. He has also refined certain aspects of the craft's finishes that reduce maintenance in the long term and thus keep the boat looking good for longer. Who says we old dogs can't learn from what is done overseas and from the younger generation?

In having a simplified deck layout, the F16 maximises the deck area &mdash; as I stated in detail earlier &mdash; yet still has the necessary hatches both above deck and below, as well as under the gunnels, to store everything one needs to take when fishing offshore.

The fish hatch, which can double as a livebait hatch, is of adequate size for any recreational gamefish angler.

The aft seat and the very comfortable forward seat (with backrest incorporated in the helm console) are both well upholstered and provide practical seating for the crew, while the skipper has his bum rest to be satisfied with.

The substantial transom roll bars not only provide a useful rod holder support, but also provide support and protection to an angler working the rods at the aft of the craft, especially in rough water.

## FINISH

Dustin explained to me that being around boats in Florida for the last few years has made him very conscious of quality and finish. In his own words, Dustin is "fastidious about finish", and it is his goal to push Z-Craft's already very good finishes to an even higher level.

To underline his claims he showed me other Z-Craft boats ready to be delivered, and I can certainly see what he's aiming for. If the F16 is anything to go by, then it certainly appears he is getting his way at Z-Craft.

The F16 not only looks very good, but some of the new ideas ensure the craft will stay looking good even if cleaning and maintenance are not of the highest order.

This craft is not carpeted, but the non-slip deck covering and gel-like finish on the interior sides of the craft make it look good and ensure that it is easy to keep clean. "I don't need to carpet it," Dustin said. "I am proud of my deck and gunnel finishes."

## CONCLUSION

The F16 performs very well. This, combined with her good looks and superior finish, make her an ideal craft for those who are new to the sport, as well as for the flyfishing fraternity. Besides these user-groups, she would also prove ideal for the father-and-son team who want a craft that is easy to use for light tackle gamefishing, and anyone looking for a smaller boat that can easily be towed to the destination of choice.