

01 Feb 2010 | Did we find the ultimate plate-aluminium fishing boat?



**Have you ever thought how spoiled boat buyers are compared with car buyers? Even when buying the most basic boat you have a choice of engine sizes and types — and makes come to that — and can have any number of custom bolt-on items. Nice cars will do that for you, but how many give you a choice of metal thickness?**

These thoughts rolled through my mind as I crawled over the Goldstar Excalibur Series 7000 and listened to the Goldstar agent for South West Australia giving me facts like that. The buyer of this one added a millimetre to the normally 5mm bottom, and another to take the sides to 5mm. Clearly a cautious man and one whose self-reliance specified twin outboards when most buyers opt for singles.

### **GOLDSTAR SURPRISE**



Goldstar is one of many Western Australian builders of plate-aluminium boats to have survived the great financial meltdown in pretty healthy shape. None of those builders is anywhere close to mass production and this is probably a reason for their survival. Production can fluctuate without causing disaster and the willingness to make just about every boat a custom product, without the big fees that usually

follow, is a big attraction to customers.

Not surprisingly, this Goldstar 7000 has a hull length of 7m, but the big surprise is a beam of 2.6m, which puts it in the permit category of trailing, with restrictions on when it can be towed. That was another of the custom options the buyer took — he could have had the trouble-free 2.5m.

The hull is not mainstream plate. Sheer line and chine line are that bit different and very attractive. The chine itself has a big reverse on it; big enough that when viewed from ahead it almost looks as though wing hulls are fitted. Which is not a bad analogy as the chines' function is pretty much the same — adding stability to a hull with a well-veed bottom. The

chine continues all the way to the bow, tapering as it goes, providing a knuckle that adds rigidity and puts reserve buoyancy in the right places.

## **ROOMY FISHING BOAT**



The buyer wanted a roomy fishing boat capable of going well offshore — it will operate out of Bunbury into Geographe

Bay — a comfortable ride in the often turbulent seas with protection to match, good stability when drifting, and a high equipment level. Its 400lt fuel capacity will take it farther offshore than anyone would want to go and its hardtop is a good start in the protection stakes.

It's a closed hardtop, a species that can cause a big heat build-up in summer — unless, that is, it has as much opening glass as the 7000. The screen's centre panel hinges open as does a big percentage of the side-glass slides. The hardtop has the usual rocket launchers across its rear edge and a grabrail. It's a bit of a stretch to hold it, but once grabbed, it makes for comfortable standing in a choppy sea, well-

extended arms making better shock absorbers than bent ones.

Rails down both sides of the top are welcome when moving to the foredeck, and transverse rails fore and aft turn the whole thing into a roof-rack for surfboards, or whatever else you can think of. While Goldstar were installing the pipe work, for good measure they included pockets to house the fenders. Then, to make loading up the roof-rack easier, they welded a couple of rungs to the side of the structure.

I'm always puzzled that most plate boats have unpainted rubbing strakes and most pressed boats don't. The time involved in masking off the strakes before painting would presumably add some cost, but surely the whole point of the strakes is to deter the removal of paint from the boat generally. The Goldstar goes one better and has a naked part-length second strake at half freeboard, the pair of them linked by a rubbing piece down the swallow tail — exactly the unprotected spot where fibreglass boats lose gelcoat. And the builder was careful that the bowrails were within the hull's perimeter, so the rails could not be the first contact with a jetty. All very thoughtful.

The Goldstar's interesting hull deserved a better day for its review — or worse, depending on your point of view. The wind hit about 10kts, and there was only a low swell left over from the last, long ago front. Of course the weather let us go flat out, but once you have found top speed, so what? So, we tried all the tricks, as you do. Sampling the wake of a bulker leaving Bunbury's port was a highlight, and I'm happy to report the 7000 acquitted itself well. Not wishing to get complaints from the pilot, we soon left them alone and moved onto wakes from the bigger local leisure boats.

## **IMPRESSIVE RIDE**



Put me down as impressed. The hull had almost no resonance and a pleasantly low level of metallic noise generally — probably the under-deck foam helps here. Landings off wakes (and the bulker produced as big a one as you would expect) showed an above-average softness. Overtaking the wake, simulating a fouled-up bar crossing, saw us track very well. Because we overtook at an angle, keeping parallel with the

ship, we picked up the beginnings of a broach that a touch of wheel fixed easily. Naturally, we had set the trim up accurately before we attempted that one.

Power options start at a single 150hp, which would probably be adequate, but unexciting. Top whack is 250hp and reportedly the commonest choice is a 200hp that should give similar performance to our twin 115hp Yamaha four-strokes, which felt very competent. Top speed of 32kts was delivered with aluminium propellers — almost certainly more available with stainless steel — and at 22 to 23kts, the almost universal good-weather cruising speed on the West Coast, they simply purred.

Stopped, the Gold Star does the right thing for fishermen; it's commendably reluctant to move from the upright. There were three onboard and no lightweights among us, but with us all at the rail we barely listed. The reasons were perhaps that extra 10mm of beam and of course, the amount of buoyancy at the chine. At rest the chines buried well, balancing the deadrise that had given us such a good ride.

It's a good boat to sit in, driving or off-siding. The seats are comfortable with about the right amount of resilience, and the footrests are nicely in sympathy with them. Also, there are plenty of things to hang onto. If you are prepared to grab on one-handed you can use the drinkholders, or adjust the stereo CD. The driver gets to play with the electronics, and our boat has some goodies: a Furuno 585 with a 1kW transducer; and a Lowrance HDS 8in. Plenty of light switches too, and the controls for the power windlass and trim tabs among others.

The engine gauges are the usual triple-digital Yamaha screens. These can give astonishing amounts of information, but are usually far harder to read than the analogue equivalents. The

Goldstar's hardtop was responsible for making ours much clearer by holding off glare.



### **STORAGE APLENTY**

There's plenty of storage for big and small items and the owner had opted for more by specifying double sidepockets. The dash top has fiddles to make housings for oddments, while tackle drawers under the driver's seat hold the more important items. Large stuff finds a home in under-seat

lockers and in a pair of under-deck compartments. These are in addition to the catch tank, and they all had good-sized gas struts.

The cabin has substantial lock-up doors, the kind you want when you park your rig outside the roadhouse restaurant. The cabin itself has enough size to make a good caravan substitute on road trips or for overnighting at anchor. The bunks are well and truly long enough, there is space for a Porta-Potti, and there's plenty of light on tap, both artificial and via the clear fore-hatch. There is all you could ask for in what is essentially a fishing boat.

The standard trailer is steel, but the review boat was on a non-standard aluminium I-beam item built by Goldstar. Aluminium is getting commoner and often enough there's little difference in price, although this one has the bells and whistles and would have been pricey even in steel. The reasons for choosing it were the usual two — lower weight and lower maintenance. We checked the trailing weight on the nearby weighbridge and found it a modest 2.86-tonne with a half-full fuel tank.

As with so many plate boats' trailers this one features skids for keel as well as side bunks. For recovery, a bucket of water over the skids practically removes friction, and hand winching required barely more effort than driving the boat on.

The Gold Star 7000 is an attractive boat for both its capabilities and its appearance. It certainly drew its share of admirers when we were photographing from Bunbury's boardwalk. It's not only a purposeful fishing boat, but has enough comfort and civilisation for the non-fishing half of the marriage to give buying permission.

## **WHAT WE LIKED**

First-class ride and construction

Roomy fishing cockpit

Good stability at rest

Big fuel capacity

Storage options

## **NOT SO MUCH**

Optional 2.6m beams means a permit to tow

**Specifications:** Goldstar Excalibur Series 7000

## **HOW MUCH?**

Price as tested: \$145,000

Options fitted:..Twin outboards, plate thickness increased 1mm, double sidepockets, custom trailer, power windlass, Furuno 585, Lowrance HDS, VHF and 27MHz radios, CD player, and tackle drawers

Priced from: \$121,000

## **GENERAL**

Material: Plate aluminium

Type: Monohull

Hull length: 7m

Beam: 2.6m (optional);  
2.5m (standard)

Trailing weight: 2850kg  
(including half-fuel)

## **CAPACITIES**

Fuel: 400lt

Rec. max. HP: 250hp

## **ENGINE**

Make/model: 2 x Yamaha F115

Type: Four-cylinder, fuel  
injected four-stroke outboard

Rated HP: 2 x 115hp

Displacement: 1741cc

Weight: 193kg (each)

Gearbox ratio: 13:28 (2.15)