



The Sailfish 2400 Gamefisher is a ready-to-go, fully optioned trailerboat that gives you options. It's small enough to tow wherever the action is firing, and has the performance to tackle river bars and tough offshore waters. As David Lockwood finds, this boat is just waiting for you to hit the ignition.

AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID LOCKWOOD

It stands to reason that Ballina on the NSW north coast is the birthplace of one of this country's premier plate-aluminium cats. After all, the Richmond River bar doesn't suffer fools or lesser boats that don't cut the mustard and dodge the waves.

But it's taken until now for Sailfish to build a tournament boat that specifically targets the scores of footloose trailerboat gamefisher-men who've come knocking on its roller door.

A new release for 2009, and the first in a whole new range, the eponymous Sailfish 2400 Gamefisher is at once a big little boat and little big boat. Powered by twin 135hp Honda outboards, which are based on the Accord engine, and spinning 17-inch, four-blade Solas props, the 2400 Gamefisher had plenty of bar-beating get-up-and-go. In fact, the boat was good for an eye-watering 40 knots top speed.

On road, the maxi trailerboat towers into the sky, so thank heavens for the fold-down boarding ladder. Yet the rig tips the scales to a very manageable 2500kg (dry weight).



This feature is provided courtesy of **BlueWater Boats & Sportsfishing** magazine. It originally appeared in issue 73, 2009

BlueWater
BOATS & SPORTSFISHING

www.bluewatermag.com.au

**GET UP
AND GO!**



The central bait station includes a fishbox, dedicated lure locker, cutting board, sink and, get this, a chunk dispenser tube!

using 5mm-thick plate for the hull and 3mm plate for the sides and cabin. The hull has a full grid framework and is welded on both sides of the deck join, and then ground back on the exterior for a very neat finish. All kinds of paint and graphics packs are available and, on the demonstrator at least, there were no obvious paint runs.

Built-in block foam provides positive buoyancy. The hull is a self-draining design, but without any noticeable tendency to leak water through the scuppers and wet your feet while on the drift. In other words, there's plenty of freeboard, even at rest with the twin 135hp 4-stroke outboards on the tail.

Just as importantly, the layout has been designed to appease dedicated gamefishermen. Rather than having a raised bridgedeck or separate helm area like some of its sister ships, namely those Sailfish in the Platinum range, the floor is all one level, with cut-down seat boxes that are less intrusive on fishing room.

Furthermore, the lock-up cabin on the 2400 Gamefisher has been pushed forward to maximise cockpit space.

Although one person can stretch out athwartships in the compact cabin and grab 40 winks, it's more of a dry storage area than dedicated accommodation. Should you find the need to sleep aboard then throw an airbed on the vast flat and carpeted floor.

With a cabin hatch you can access the anchor locker, although the route around the wide sidedecks is preferred. But get yourself a retrieval buoy and stow the rope in a tub in the cabin and you can anchor in deep water without having to crawl, stoop or tread gingerly on the deck.

KIT AND CABOODLE

Setting the standard for the new range, the 2400 Gamefisher demonstrator was a loaded boat. This is because "no one in the \$150,000 league wants a standard boat these days", explains Sailfish dealer Gavin Daly, adding that there are no options on the boat. Add fuel, tackle and lures and you're ready to roll.

To cater for the gamefish market, the standard fuel capacity of 300 litres was increased to twin 180-litre tanks, but there are options for twin 200-litre tanks, too. Each tank has a separate Racor fuel filter, accessible in a stern hatch also containing each engine's cranking battery.

The main battery switch, with parallel function, is nearby. Steering is twin-ram Hydrive hydraulic and pretty much torque-free.

Standard electronics include Furuno FCV 585L colour sounder with 1kW dual-frequency 50/200kHz transducer and matching GP 7000 plotter. But there's plenty of room to mount a bigger screen if you want.

Overhead, in the radio box, are the GME VHF and stereo, while the dash has the usual matching set of Faria analogue gauges for the 135hp Hondas, plus switch panels for navigation, and cockpit spreader lights, bilge and deckwash pumps. And with clears between the windscreen and hardtop, electronics and crew enjoy weather protection.

FITTED OUT FOR FISHING

But the fishing features are what makes this boat. There are

twin, plumbed livebait tanks of reasonable capacity in the transom, each with slightly rounded corners to help keep the bait moving.

Plus there are sidepockets, with racks for storing gaffs and tagpoles, and eight heavy-duty, welded rodholders in the nice, wide coamings, which are padded and offer good thigh-height support.

The two angled mid-transom rodholders will be great for towing short lures.

The boat comes with a berley bucket, with long-handled chomp-er within reach of the cockpit. A walkway between the outboards will assist with rod-tip clearance when fighting a deep-slugging fish. Just make sure you don't lean on the aft gate, which doubles as the fold-down boarding ladder – it's held in place with rubber toggles and might open and spill you out to sea.

Rod storage exists in a seven-stack rocket launcher tracing the trailing edge of the hardtop. There are racks for three prized outfits under the hardtop and behind the helm seat. Both seats are mounted on storage boxes that include tackle lockers.

The Gamefisher has 4.5m black Relax outrigger poles on trick adjustable stainless steel bases, with scope for the boatowner to run a 'centrerigger' from the rocket launcher. With the poles flopped out, there appeared to be a decent lure spread, with the long 'rigger lures bound to be swimming in clear water even when not arcing on turns.

However, the centrepiece is unquestionably the central bait station, with fishbox, dedicated lure locker, storage hatch, knife holder, cutting board and sink plus, get this, a berley tube through which you dispatch cubes into the water. I'm told future boats will have a screw-on cover over the berley tube instead of the oversized bung that popped out at speed.

The upholstered cushion over the fishbox on the aft end of the bait station doubles as a fighting 'chair'. A heavy-duty drop gimbal was mounted in perfect position. With your feet against the transom, you can gain additional purchase.

It seemed like a really good set-up, reminiscent of the kind of arrangements seen on pocket



gamefishers in past eras, before the advent of better stand-up tackle.

BLUEWATER RIDE

As touched on, the so-called Hydroflow hull, with flat, aft sections, has plenty of buoyancy to support the weight of the 4-stroke Hondas. Plant the throttles and the cat jumps out of the water. In fact, the transition from trolling speed, where I noted a neat wave pattern and barely discernible engine noise, is almost imperceptible.

But above all, the impression is that this is a fast cat. The following (supplied) fuel consumption figures also point to a frugal canyon runner.

At 2500rpm, the boat is happily planing at 13 knots. But it's even happier at 3000rpm where it runs nice and level for a heavy-weather cruise of 16.7 knots.

Cruise of 3500rpm returns 21 knots for a very economical 14-

15 litres per side. You only use 18-19 litres per side at 4000rpm for 24-25 knots cruise and, should conditions allow, you can reel in the sea miles at 30 knots at 4500rpm for 24-25 litres per side.

We hit a top speed of 40 knots at 5850rpm and found fast cruise of 33 knots at 5000rpm. Although the 2400 Gamefisher with twin 135hp outboards is no slouch, I wouldn't fit twin 115hp Hondas, since they use a similar-sized block and are virtually the same weight for less grunt. And, with a boat built for bar work, you want acceleration.

Hit the highway and follow the fish up and down the coast. Take bar crossings in your stride. Reel in the sea miles without draining the fishing fuel fund dry. And enjoy the big, surefooted platform.

Little wonder Sailfish are faring so well in the current choppy climate. There's always a place for a plate-aluminium cat. 🐱

HIGHLIGHTS



- New Gamefisher series comes fully cocked for serious fishing.
- Maxi trailerboat can be towed to new frontiers and used as a true exploration vessel.
- Excellent rough-water performance.
- Easily driven alloy cat hull.
- Good, tough build, tidy welds and big-boat engineering.
- Honda outboards had snappy acceleration through the rev range for bar work.
- Stable at rest and a massive cockpit for serious fishing.
- Long-range performance.
- Established brand and dealership, with expected good support.
- Good resale value.

SPEC CHECK

SAILFISH 2400 GAMEFISHER

PRICE AS TESTED

The demo boat was available for \$139,990 including twin upgraded Honda 135hp outboards, custom dual-axle Sailfish trailer and complete, fish-ready fitout.

OPTIONS FITTED

None. The Gamefisher series comes fully loaded.

PRICED FROM

Retail price for the 2400 Gamefisher rig as tested is \$149,990.

GENERAL

Material: Plate aluminium (5mm bottom, 6mm chines, 3mm sides)

Type: Catamaran with symmetrical hulls

Length overall: 7.4m with bowsprit

Hull length: 6.7m

On-road length: 8.15m

Beam: 2.44m

Draft: Approx 0.6m

Deadrise: n/a

Weight: Approx 2500kg (dry on road)

CAPACITIES

Berths: Two on deck, one in the cabin

Fuel: 2 x 180-litre tanks

Water: n/a

ENGINE

Make/model: Twin Honda

BF135 4-stroke outboards

Rated hp: 135 at 5500rpm

Displacement: 2.35 litres

Weight: Approx. 220kg

Gearboxes (Make/ratio):

Outboard 2.14:1

Props: Solas stainless steel

17- x 14-inch four-blade

SUPPLIED BY

Webbe Marine

27 Marshall Road,

Kirrawee, NSW 2232

Tel: (02) 9521 7944

Freecall 1800 885 635

www.webbemarine.com.au

"Little wonder Sailfish are faring so well in the current choppy climate."

And, unlike some earlier Sailfish models, the boat we drove is not over-width. Therefore, a towing permit isn't needed, and you are legally permitted to tow the rig to the ramp before sunup.

This is important, as no angler wants to be restricted to launching a boat like this in daylight hours.

That said, there are wide-beam versions of the Sailfish better suited to in-water propositions, which are popular with charter boat operators, commercial fishermen and rescue organisations.

The impressive custom Sailfish aluminium trailer under the demonstrator is also deserving of ink. The dual-axle trailer comes with 14-inch mag wheels, hydraulic disc brakes with copper lines, stainless steel callipers and trick LED lighting. And it's a drive-on/drive-off design that makes light work of launching the big cat.

Meanwhile, although the hull had a nip and a tuck, so it tows the line, its footprint remains substantial.

The so-called Hydroflow hull features wider sponsons and a flatter run aft than older Sailfish hulls. The design generates considerable buoyancy and lift, which sees the 2400 ride high on the water.

Throttles to the dash, the boat travels like a scalded cat and, with a touch of out-trim on the outboard legs, willingly takes to the air.

BUILT TOUGH

Meanwhile, construction is time-proven, hand-welded aluminium,