



# CHALLENGER 550S

5 – 6 METRE DO-IT-ALL RIG.

By Kevin Power

“DAD! CAN YOU TAKE US UP THE HARBOUR FOR A WAKE BOARD?”

“SORRY SON – I’D LOVE TO BUT OUR BOAT HAS NO SKI POLE. WE CAN’T EVEN MOUNT A ROPE TO THE STERN BECAUSE IT WOULD GET FOULED UP WITH THE TUNA TUBES, AND I’D HAVE TO REMOVE THE OUTRIGGERS.”

“AHHH DAD IT SUCKS THAT WE CAN’T USE THE BOAT FOR MORE THAN FISHING!”

If you are not a hardened fisherman, prefer fibreglass over aluminium, and like to take your family out for a day’s wakeboarding or skiing, a multipurpose boat is the way to go. Every boat is a compromise in one way or another and when selecting a do-it-all boat you need to do your homework and factor in how you spend your time on the water between fishing, cruising and water sports. Doing this will assist in determining the style and size of craft you should consider, and what options you need to include/exclude.

My take on where the Challenger 550s fits would be about a 50/50 split between fishing and water sports. For the fishing side of the equation the s model doesn’t have too much flash upholstery in the cockpit and the easily-washable marine carpet on the floor means fish, blood and guts are not going to leave your pride and joy looking very second-hand after your first fishing outing. The rear seating bins can be removed easily for that extra room needed for playing a fish or fitting in all your fishing paraphernalia: scallop dredges, dive gear and what-have-you. An optional bait board also clips on and off the ski pole assembly easily. The dash is neatly arranged and Challenger have moulded the dash to permit the flush mounting of a modestly-sized fish finder/GPS.

For skiing and recreation there is plenty of under-floor storage and some comfy squabs forward for the kids; and the removable bin seats are comfortable and ideal for an observer while biscuiting or skiing. The fuel-injected 90 Suzuki is whisper-quiet, yet has plenty of punch to pull up a slalom skier. At 4200rpm the Suzuki is in the meat of its torque curve, giving the Challenger a cruise speed of 35mph and at full throttle, 6200rpm pushes the 550s along at a respectable 46 mph.

Where the wee Challenger excels is in ride and handling. You don’t have to take a few mates out when you go fishing as the 550s is a breeze to get on and off the trailer. Handling-wise, the 550s is a gem – it doesn’t let go in turns, it responds to trim well and really feels like the equivalent of a sports car on water. When the going gets rough the 550s is well up to the task for most conditions with its strakeless hull providing a smooth ride for a 5.5 metre boat which will be important if you wish to do a little fishing outside the confines of your local harbour. So if you are after 5 – 6 metre all-round rig for skiing and fishing, one that’s a breeze to handle on your own but is also capable of handling the rougher water outside the harbour, you should definitely try out the Challenger 550s. **BF**