



I was recently toiling away at the key-board thinking, as I always do “What a great day to be out fishing!” About then I received a call from Tony at Challenger Boats in Te Puke. “Are you keen for a fish tomorrow in our new Challenger 650?” What can one say but “Of course!”

Photos and review - Kevin Power

Challenger Boats 650 SE

After re-arranging my appointments I sorted my gear.

With tackle, rod, reel and camera gear in tow I met up with Tony and Alan from Challenger Boats and jumped on board the new Challenger 650 SE fitted with Suzuki 175hp four-stroke outboard.

The first thing that struck me was its clean lines with the new graphics, and the compactness of the 175hp Suzuki.

The test-boat was well-optioned with all the extras you would expect of a boat in this class. Included were the Humminbird colour sounder, Humminbird colour plotter, vhf, stereo, capstan and hydraulic steering. The Hydraulic steering is a must I believe with modern outboards above 115hp. Under the squabs in the cabin the bulkheads are sealed for added safety. Under a lid between the front squabs is a portable toilet and storage area. A large hatch makes getting out onto the bow easy and also lets plenty of light into the cabin.

The cockpit layout was very stylish but remained entirely functional for all activities and was comfortably able accommodate four for fishing; an ideal package for family boating.

The helm seat was very comfortable with all the controls ergonomically laid out. Two stylish loungers faced backwards. Their clever design meant they don't impinge greatly on the space in the rear of the craft

and they also provided a wealth of storage space for things like life-jackets etc. I was pleased to see there was enough deck room around the windscreen to allow access to the bow. This is something I always look for in a hull as it makes docking, getting people on and off and - more importantly - fighting a circling kingie much easier.

Tony fired up the big 175 Suzuki, and when Alan arrived back from parking the ute and trailer he asked if the engine was running! Yes, it was that quiet! I wanted to give the hull a real workout as it was a blue-water hull design and had a reputation of being one of the smoothest-riding fibreglass hulls in the country.

Terry Reid, the hull designer, went for a unique strake-less hull design which is a trademark of all Challenger models. While the deadrise is a moderate 18.5 degrees providing stability at rest, the hull is not burdened by strakes. These have the effect of reducing the real-world deadrise of most hulls. To put in layman's speak the theory is that the lack of strakes allows the water to peel unhindered from the keel to the chine, allowing the hull to slice through the water without the strakes stalling the water flow across the hull. This virtually eliminates the 'bang... bang' syndrome many hull designs experience, particularly when running into a three-quarter seaway.

A brisk northerly was blowing and the tide was running out. The nasty chop that the Tauranga entrance is renowned for provided perfect conditions to test the hull design. The 175 Suzuki was so quiet that even at 5200rpm it was pushing us at a respectable 36mph as we headed out to A buoy. There was no need to back off through the chop as the hull sliced up the waves providing us with a remarkably smooth ride for the conditions. We had to back off slightly once through the entrance when we came across a large 2 metre swell, to prevent getting overly airborne! I can confirm the Challenger 650 is one of, if not the smoothest riding 6.5m fibreglass hull produced in New Zealand.

Back in the harbour I wound out the 175 Suzuki and with a bit of trim had it skimming along at 50 mph at 6200rpm. Alan spotted some birds working so we stopped to throw some soft plastics in their direction. That story will keep for another day.

Challenger Boats new director, Tony Hawker, said their new approach of marketing Challenger Boats directly to the customer allows them not only to give the purchaser a better deal financially but also provides the buyer with better service and many personalised options. These range from hull colour, interior design choices and the luxury of personally consulting with Challenger Boats during the building process.



If you are considering a 6m-plus all-rounder you would be doing yourself a disservice if you didn't put the Challenger 650 on your shortlist of boats to test. BF



Come in for a test glide.

The gliding effect of our unique smooth hull design needs to be experienced to be believed. We've challenged convention to develop a hull that delivers an un-equalled glide through our water conditions. There are 18 boats in the Challenger range across 4 sizes – the 550, 595, 650 and 720. Contact us today to arrange a free test of any of our models and experience the glide you get from our focus on crafting pleasure.

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