

The 485 Workmate is a small boat with impressive capabilities.

INSET: The 60hp keeps the price at an affordable level for most fishos.



Small boat, big heart

Dave Rae shares his thoughts on the Surtees 4.85 Workmate after spending an afternoon at the helm of this tough little platie.

THE AFTERNOON OF this boat test involved zipping around Coffs Harbour's semi protected harbour. It was too rough to enter the open ocean. With a 20 knot southerly and a building easterly cyclone swell, I wasn't even sure we'd make it out of the groyne that "shelters" the ramp, let alone do a boat test! Mark, the owner of Coffs Harbour Marine, wasn't too concerned, he assured me these boats were as tough as nails.

One look at the Surtees and you'll notice that a serious fisho has been involved in the

design. These boats, while lacking glamour, have everything that the committed angler needs. If sipping champagne with the love of your life is your reason for purchasing a boat, then a Workmate isn't for you. However, if you're after a boat built to last with the ability to withstand bar crossings, open expanses of water and swell, then think seriously about a Surtees Workmate. These are genuine plate boats constructed from 4mm and 3mm marine grade plate alloy.

COMFORTABLE AND STABLE

This boat rode smoothly in very average conditions, a result of the fine point of entry, a deep-V hull and a 15-degree deadrise in the stern. However, the above would ordinarily trade away stability at rest and dryness for the nice ride. This is why you'll find a large chine along each side and a ballast tube running along the keel. The tube fills when the boat stops, and with a capacity of 280L, that's close to an additional mass of 280kg

forcing the hull deeper into the water to improve stability. The ballast tube quickly empties itself as the boat moves forward. In rough water, the ballast hatch can be secured to lock water inside the tube and help maintain the ride in a following sea. Another piece of good news comes with the subfloor structure. Six stringers run the full length of the hull, each are welded to the bottom plates in a continuous weld; not the spot-welds common in some boats. The floor is alloy checker plate. When the manufacturing process is complete, two airtight flotation chambers are the result. Both are pressure tested to ensure their integrity before leaving the factory.

INSIDE THE HULL

The cuddy cab, while not large enough for bunks, provides shelter for your gear and comfort for the driver and crew. However, I did manage to give both Mark and I a few face washes by slamming it into an oncoming sea – but I will admit to travelling a tad too fast!

SURTEES 4.85 WORKMATE

LENGTH: 4.85m BEAM: 2m

DEADRISE: 15 degrees

HULL WEIGHT: 350kg

MAX HP: 70hp, as tested with 60hp

PRICE: \$35,860 as tested

FIT OUT: ★★★★★

RIDE/HANDLING: ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

FISHABILITY: ★★★★★

OVERALL FINISH: ★★★★★

VALUE: ★★★★★

CONTACT: (02) 6652 4722; www.coffsharbourmarine.com.au

The dash offers sufficient room to house gauges and steering wheel without overcrowding. It's comfortable and functional, even for a big bloke like myself. A side pocket is located to the right of the wheel and looks ideal for keys, wallet and phone. There's a nice, wide shelf running above the wheel wide enough to offer sufficient room for a good sized sonar/GPS unit, compass and a jacket or hat. The toughened windscreen is hinged on solid alloy hinges (which can be folded by tripping three metal latches), thus allowing this boat to be stored in smaller garages. Access to the anchor well is through the cuddy, via an oversized alloy hatch.

Two seats are located behind the cuddy and, as is typical for the rest of the boat, are perched upon bullet-proof plate boxes with open storage to the front.

Gunwales are wide and covered in non slip rubber, meaning that you can stand on them as you get in and out. Rod holders can be fitted to your preference. Rear detachable seats are an available option, as is a bank of rod holders. Storage gutters run down both sides of the boat and the stern consists of space for portable tanks if you don't go for the under-floor option. A plumbed kill tank is located in the floor and is accessed through a simple lift up lid. The test boat came with a transom-mounted bait board and rod holders, a berley bucket, ladder and a live bait tank. These are some of the standard options available.

OUTBOARD & EASY LAUNCHING

The test boat was powered by a 60hp Honda four-stroke motor, which provided plenty of power and get up and go. Due to the rushed nature of the test, the boat wasn't fitted with an accurate speedometer, however, given the nasty conditions, we were able to go much faster than I expected and with much less discomfort than I anticipated. Mark assures me that with two people on board, this combination can reach about 32 knots.

One really unique inclusion is the Surtees Trailer Catch. It's an ingenious setup in which a lever arm and sliding counter balance allow the boat to be driven on and off the trailer without the driver having to leave the vehicle. In my neck of the woods, where water surges up and down the ramp, this latch will save many vehicles from a rear end dip in the salt!

The Surtees design process starts with a bare hull whereby the buyer determines what features he or she requires. The boats come with a range of two-pack colours that form combinations with a clear, acid-etched product called Nyalic, which gives a "waxy" look to the alloy. Mark tells me it's extremely durable and does a great job at protecting the boat from the salt.

In closing, we should note that Surtees offers a six year worldwide hull warranty. I think that speaks for itself! ■

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