



WORDS and IMAGES
by The Captain



BATTLE AT THE BANKS

THE CAPTAIN WANTS TO WIN THE HUTCHWILCO NEW ZEALAND BOAT SHOW'S GRAND PRIZE. IT'S A SURTEES 750 GAME FISHER POWERED BY AN F300 YAMAHA. FIRST WE'D HAVE TO TEST IT. THE PLAN? DRIVE IT 100 NAUTICAL MILES (ROUND TRIP) TO SOME OF THE MOST REMOTE FISHING GROUNDS IN THE COUNTRY. OH, AND FILL THE CHILLY BIN TO THE BRIM, BRO'.

WIN THIS BOAT





(ABOVE) SURTEES SQUAD: Adam Dyck and Isabell Zitzelsberger from Surtees talk game plan on the back of the 750.

(BELOW) RAMPING UP: The ramp at Waihou Bay isn't much chop, hence all the tractors in the background.



ADVENTURE TEST: SURTEES 750 GAME FISHER

The East Cape region of New Zealand's North Island is one of the most isolated spots in the country. Steep rugged mountains drop straight into empty black sand beaches and pristine water. The road in snakes around rivers full of rainbow trout, and through small Maori communities, while a volcanic island puffs smoke out on the horizon. We're not sure whether to grab a fly rod or a jigging outfit, but a quick peek in the rearview mirror at the Surtees 750 Game Fisher in tow reconfirms our blue water ambitions. We're heading from Whakatane to the small fishing village of Waihou Bay, which is notorious for big kings, hapuka and everything in between. Chur, bro'.

TESTING THE GOODS

Our goal for the trip is to make sure the Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show's grand prize, a Surtees 750 Game Fisher, is er, fully functional prior to getting given away to one lucky bastard at the show. Oh, and to fill the chilly bin with as much fresh fish as possible. Along for the journey we had Adam Dyck, CEO of Surtees Boats, Isabell Zitzelsberger, Surtees marketing exec and kingfish wrangler extraordinaire, and Nick Binks, a man who could pump out a PR knot in the pitch dark, while sleeping.

We roll into Waihou Bay around lunchtime and the weather is looking mighty fine for an arvo sesh. The ramp condition, however, is pretty average and a nearby fleet of tractors confirms our assessment. No dramas though, we slide the 750 off the Hosking trailer and into the drink. We make our way out of the bay and towards a nearby headland where Nick reckons we might score a king. The all-black — appropriate, eh, bro' — 750 Game Fisher looks tough as it cuts past rolling green hills and white cliff faces. Powered by a Yamaha F300, she moves along quick sticks and handles beautifully as we tackle the first patch of swell. When the going does get tough, you can lock in up to 530L of water ballast to give it that punch into a head sea, as well as making her feel more surefooted while fishing.

Nick follows the 40m contour line until red marks start painting up the sounder. He then auto-deploys the Minn Kota Ulterra and holds over the honey hole. Down zip the jigs, instant hook-up — then sharked after 10 seconds. Devo. We try again, but unfortunately get the same result. Except this time, the shark sticks. After an hour of muscling, a 100kg plus bronzie bobs boatside. We snip him off and head back to Waihou Bay with our tails between our legs.

"WE ROLL INTO WAIHOU BAY AROUND LUNCHTIME AND THE WEATHER IS LOOKING MIGHTY FINE FOR AN ARVO SESH."





NOT LEAN ON THE SCREEN:
This rig comes with a Garmin 8416xsv MFD in the dash and an 952xs in the cockpit.



CHILLED VIBES:
Kiwis love a good chilly bin. This 750 comes with an Icey Tek in it's very own slide-out cubbie.



JUST ADD WATER:
The winner of this package will also score \$5000 worth of Okuma fishing tackle.



DOUBLE DOWN:
You'll find a live bait tank underneath each of the transom walk-throughs.



ONE GETS IT DONE:
Ponies come courtesy of this F300 Yammie donk. Having the single outboard also allows for heaps more fishing room on the swim platform.



ELECTRIC FEEL:
The self-deploying Minn Kota Ulterra is becoming a staple accessory to all bluewater battleships these days.

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

Waihou Bay consists of a small campground, general store, servo and a beautiful old pub called the Waihou Bay Lodge — and the rickety boat ramp. It's an idyllic seaside town that runs on fishing — both legitimate and black market. Within a few minutes, we watch a bloke trade some fish for the use of a vacuum sealer. That bloke then trades some of the fish for a basil plant.

We pull the 750 out of the water and settle in for a steak and a couple of NZ brews. With the sharks running rampant at our only mark, we're stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Enter Scott Adamson, a softly spoken, but salty sea dog with a thick black beard. "No luck today, fullas?" he asks from across the bar.

We shake our heads.

"If there was ever a day to go to Ranfurly Banks, tomorrow would be it," Scott whispers.

"But we spoke to a few locals before coming on this trip and they told us it'd be way too dangerous," Nick responds.

Scott gives us the lowdown on what makes these grounds so dangerous. "You've got a lot of current to contest with," he says. "Current comes up the east coast from Gisborne and meets the water pouring out of the Bay of Plenty right on the Banks — which come up from 1000m to 15m, so you have a huge upwelling of water that makes for lots of turbulence and huge swells. You've really got to know what you're doing, you need an intimate knowledge of local weather, you have to be well equipped and prepared to save yourself if something goes pear-shaped. Of course, if you had a local skipper, maybe someone like me..."

After a few more beers, we give Scott the green light. "We'll meet at the ramp at 3am sharp," he says.

Guess it's bedtime.

"WITH THE SHARKS RUNNING RAMPANT AT OUR ONLY MARK, WE'RE STUCK BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE."





(BELOW) IN YO FACE: Adam reckons this is a little fella for NZ standards. Alright mate, we get it, your kings are better than ours.

BANKS OR BROKE

We're kicked out of bed at an ungodly hour and hit the showers to try to wash away the taste of half a dozen schooners of IPA.

Next thing, we're launching the 750 and blasting straight out to the bait grounds. The Hella lights attract a huge school of jack macks (yakkas) to the back of the boat and we fill the tank in half an hour. It's a 45nm run to the grounds and we're going to be doing most of it in the dark. Time to get comfy.

The Surtees has heaps of seating for the crew and everyone is comfortable and dry as we zip around the most easterly point of the Kiwi mainland and out into the deep. We're cruising at 25 knots and burning 50L per hour through the fly-by-wire controlled F300 Yammie. The 750 has a 400L fuel tank and we'll be needing that extra juice today.

We're still 10nm off the mark when the sun rises. It feels like we've been driving for an eternity, but the vitamin D lifts morale slightly. "The fish life at Ranfurly is incredible," Scott says in an attempt to pump us up. "Everything is big and you can catch fish there that aren't very common on the North Island."

As we get closer to our mark, the sounder finds bottom again, which zips from 300m up to 30m. The ocean changes dramatically, too — what was a fairly calm sea turns to custard. The swell picks up tenfold, whitecapping in spots and leaving huge troughs. But it's not the weather that's changed, it's just the angry Ranfurly Banks sea. We spare a thought for those Polynesians navigating their way to Aotearoa in open canoes nearly 800 years ago. Respect.



(ABOVE) BILLY THE BASS ON STEROIDS: A 16yo fresh-faced Scott Adamson at Ranfurly Banks back in the day. How's that for a bass?



"BUT IT'S NOT THE WEATHER THAT'S CHANGED, IT'S JUST THE ANGRY RANFURLY BANKS SEA."



FULLY STACKED

Finally we're on the mark, the Garmin is lit and the bait is loaded. The fish are stacked — straight down with the jigs and everyone connects to a king. The rats are in fine force, but Adam manages to pluck a solid 10kg model out of the school. We catch them on everything from jigs and stickbaits to live yakkas, pillies and squid. The Aussies are stoked with the session, but the Kiwis are after different quarry — hapuka. Finally, Adam and Nick pluck a double hook-up on something that doesn't feel like a king. After an awesome tussle, they boat a couple of massive trumpeters. The Kiwis are grinning now. Their smiles get even bigger when The Captain's crew hook two hapuka on jigs and haul them over the extra-wide gunwales of the 750 Game Fisher. You've never seen two fish bled and iced as quick as those two hapuka. We figure they must be pretty awesome on the chew.

It's around lunchtime and the Ranfurlys are really starting to turn to shit, but we've got plenty of fish so Scott makes the call to head home. No complaints, we're chuffed with the solid haul.

HAPUKA FLUKER: Jack was damn lucky to snag this hapuka on a vertical jig. Dinner sorted.



RATATOUILLE: Adam flings another rat kingy over the 750's XL gunwales for a quick release.



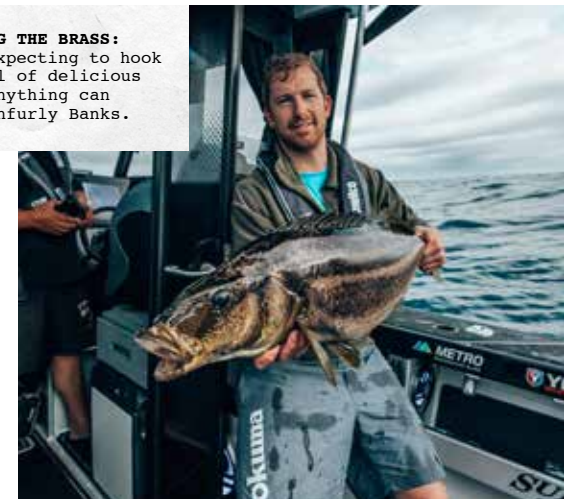
"THE AUSSIES ARE STOKED WITH THE SESSION, BUT THE KIWIS ARE AFTER DIFFERENT QUARRY — HAPUKA."



MORE ROOM TO GROOVE: The cage around the swim platform was our favourite feature on the 750. You can instantly fish two more people off the stern.



(BELOW) BRING THE BRASS: We weren't expecting to hook into a school of delicious trumpeter. Anything can happen at Ranfurly Banks.





SURTEES 750 GAME FISHER	
LENGTH:	7.5m
BEAM:	2.5m
TRANSOM DEADRISE:	20 degrees
BMT WEIGHT:	2410kg (approx)
FUEL CAPACITY:	400L
WATER BALLAST:	540L
MIN HP:	200HP
MAX HP:	350HP
PERSONS:	8
PRICED FROM	\$136,000
PRICE AS TESTED	\$250,000
ENGINE SPECS	
ENGINE MAKE:	Yamaha
MODEL:	F300
TYPE:	24-valve DOHC V6
DISPLACEMENT:	4.16L
DRY WEIGHT:	259kg
MORE INFORMATION	
Surtees Boats 2909 State Highway 30, Whakatane, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand. +64 7 322 8461; www.surteesboats.com	



**"YOU CAN WIN THIS ENTIRE PACKAGE
— VALUED AT AN INSANE
\$250,000 — AT THE 2020 HUTCHWILCO
NEW ZEALAND BOAT SHOW."**



EXTRA, EXTRA

After an awesome 100nm round trip, it's back to the ramp to clean the scales out of the Icey Tek chilly bin and scrub blood off the deck. As mentioned earlier, you can win this entire package — valued at an insane \$250,000 — at the Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show in Auckland. The list of the extras is off the chart, but a quick check of some of the toys uncovers a 36-volt Minn Kota Ulterra, Lone Star GX3 drum winch, Fusion Apollo MS-RA770 sound system hooked up to a 4" cabin speakers, 7.7" LED deck speakers and a 10" LED sub to feel dat deep bass. There's SeaDek galore and Hella Marine LED lighting in and out of the water — awesome for catching livies at night. On the flanks there are Lectrotab trim tabs and Oceanblue outriggers that'll go nicely with the \$5000 worth of Okuma fishing gear also onboard. Oh, and I dropped a yakka somewhere in the bilge, but couldn't find it when we cleaned up. My bad.

HOW TO WIN

To win this insane package you need to visit the eight stamping booths at The 2020 Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show (dates are TBC due to COVID-19) and stamp the correct boxes to spell SURTEES1. Then place the completed form in the entry box. Prize draw will be streamed live on Facebook (boatshownewzealand).



The largest commercial and recreational boat dealer in south-west Victoria!

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