

SAVAGE 545 BLUEWATER

Reviewed by Andrew Norton

Designed for serious offshore usage, the Telwater-built 545 has a fibreglass cuddy cabin mated with a sheet alloy hull and frankly is one of the best-looking cuddy cabins I've yet tested. It also has 'level' flotation for up to six adults, ensuring that should the hull be swamped it will float upright.

The 545 measures 5.45 by 2.33 metres with a hull depth of 1.24 metres. The bottom sheeting is 3.0mm and topsides 2.0mm, and the bare hull weighs 527kg. The maximum power rating is 115hp or 203kg on the extra-longshaft transom, enabling all 115hp four-strokes (except Honda's BF115) and DFI two-strokes to be accommodated. A 110 litre under-floor fuel tank with deck fill is standard.

Like the Savage 455 Bay Cruiser, the hull is typically Savage with a fine entry and convex flare above the chine level, flattening out to a relatively shallow deadrise aft.

This design provides a soft ride into head seas with good reverse buoyancy forward to reduce the possibility of broaching in a following sea. The broad reverse-angle chines provide excellent lift for easy planing and good stability once immersed.

Forward is a cast bowsprit with stainless steel bow roller and staghorn bollard, flanked by split bow rails. As with the Savage 455 Bay Cruiser, there's no separate anchor well but instead a side-hinged forehatch with ground tackle stowage below at the forward end of the cockpit. The forehatch is accessed via a centre opening panel in the curved, clear windscreen which should be fitted with a grab rail inboard of the 'screen framing.

Either side of the cuddy footwell is a cushioned bench seat with reasonable sitting headroom above, and stainless steel support struts for the moulded cuddy. This has a massive dash area to starboard of the walkway with space for full instrumentation, a radio and sounder and a drink bottle holder. To port of the walkway is another drink holder, an angled plastic glovebox and a very useful storage bin in the cuddy side. The thickly-cushioned pedestal helm and passenger seats are very supportive with the former well positioned in relation to the steering wheel and outboard remote control box. The Bimini was



sufficiently high to allow for full standing headroom at the helm and had five rocket launchers as standard.

Either side of the carpeted main floor is a low side pocket beneath the sidedeck buoyancy and off the floor to provide toeholds when playing a fish over the topsides. A single plastic rod holder is fitted each side, inboard of the low side rails which sweep down to the full width transom pod.

Telwater has cleverly positioned the folding aft lounge below the level of the optional side-hinged transom access door, with a backrest bolster attached to both the transom coaming and door. This enables a full-width lounge to be fitted for better hull trimming without hampering access through the door.

To port of the single outboard mounting pad is a bracket for fitting either a boarding ladder or an auxiliary outboard bracket, while to starboard of the outboard there's a large alloy live bait tank with rounded corners, which does appear a bit of an afterthought.

In my opinion the Evinrude E-TEC 115 fitted by Coffs Harbour Marine of Coffs Harbour NSW, which supplied the demo 545, was a perfect match to the hull and provided very good performance with low fuel consumption and exhaust emissions.

It started instantly hot or cold, never blew any oil smoke, and when trolling could scarcely be heard and had very low vibration levels. The Evinrude control box had a light but positive shifting action, and at 170kg the 115 was 16 percent below the maximum transom loading ensuring good fore and aft hull trim when carrying passengers on the aft lounge.

Spinning a 17 inch pitch stainless steel Viper prop and pushing a total of one tonne including two adults, the 115 trolled us at 2.0kt and 650 revs using 0.7lph. A clean plane was achieved at only 11.9kt and 2,700, revs and at the economical cruise revs of 3,000, ideal for running offshore, the averages were 15.6kt and 12.4lph.

Increasing the revs to 4,000 gave averages of 24.3kt and 25.0lph, and through full lock figure of eight turns at these revs no prop ventilation occurred. The mechanical steering was direct but reasonably light, and although the hull banked fairly steeply through the turns, cornering was always predictable.

As with the 455, the ride over a chop to 30cm was very soft but with the wind on the port or starboard bow a fair amount of spray reached the cuddy. Across the wind the hull tracked well, and downwind



with the outboard leg trimmed out the 545 virtually steered itself. Although testing on the Gold Coast Broadwater is not the same as offshore, the hull had a good 'feel' about it and should be a good sea boat in offshore conditions.

When the throttle lever was 'floored' from 4,000 revs the 115 accelerated us rapidly out to Wide Open Throttle, where the averages were 35.9kt and 38.6lph at 5,750 revs with the 115 under-propped to handle substantially bigger occupant loads with ease. Even at WOT the noise levels were unobtrusive at the helm.

Back at rest the stability was just as impressive and I (115kg) could step down from a jetty onto a sidedeck with the hull initially heeling then stiffening rapidly. Two hefty adults (210kg) could safely fish from one side in the 545.

The 545 was easily retrieved on its Savage TQ58VBWT tandem axle bilge skid and keel roller trailer, and as tested with a full fuel tank the towing weight is 1200kg; easily handled by an automatic six cylinder Commodore or Falcon.

Overall the 545 was well finished and as of October, 2009 and as tested retailed for \$48,900. For more details call Ph: (02) 6652 4722. **SWF**