

TEST

SAVAGE 435 JABIRU PRO

Story & Photos: Rick Huckstepp



COMING OF AGE

BARRA BOATS HAVE COME A LONG WAY FROM BEING STRAPPED TO THE TOP OF A 4WD OR THROWN OVER A BOX TRAILER

Back in the very early 1980s, I lobbied in Darwin for a three-week introduction to barramundi fishing. It really was the wild west back in those days with access to some of the now famous locales such as Shady Camp and Four Mile Hole in Kakadu National Park being 4WD access only, especially so, immediately after the wet season.

Barra fishing was mostly done from very basic small boats, and not many were transported on boat trailers. Most were strapped to the roof rack on top of a 4WD, or tied on a box trailer.

The standard fishing platform back then was the Manta Craft 12ft punt

with a 15hp two-stroke outboard, which spent its life, when not on the transom, lying in the back of the 4WD on an old car tyre to prevent it from rolling around and getting damaged crossing rough terrain.

At that time most anglers trolled lures for the targeted iconic species, but as time rolled on with the evolution of better lures and tackle, more anglers changed their style to standing and casting at drains and structures. The introduction of soft plastics helped this enormously and then along came fly fishing.

If you have ever tried, along with another fisherman, to stand in a 12ft punt and fish crocodile infested



These stable Jabiru vee-nosed punts caused a change in NT fishing attitudes.

will quickly agree
as a certain amount of
at involved.

FLIPPING FLAT DOGS

of the deciding factors when
anchoring in the fishing position was:
How long will it take to swim to the
river bank if I fall in?" (This was always
a distinct possibility). The problem was
the reptiles you were trying to avoid
being eaten by were often sunning
themselves on the said bank waiting
for you to do just that!

Stability, or more of it, was called for
and larger boats started to appear on
northern waterways.

One in particular
was the Savage
Jabiru punt, which
at about 4m, was a
beamy, high-sided boat
with flat decks rather than
exposed ribs.

Then, thrown into the standard
fitout were short casting decks with
stowage underneath; something quite
new to this part of the country.

The 15hp could no longer cut it and
powerplants jumped to 35 and 40hp
and retailers enjoyed boon times,
because they were now selling trailers
with most boat sales. And they sold
plenty of them, because the roads were
often nonexistent and the untamed
country took a terrible toll on these
flimsy trailers that in reality had been
engineered for the better conditions
down south.

The barramundi fishing and the new
boats had a profound effect on me
and within three years I was living in
the Northern Territory and towing a
custom-built, fully-surveyed alloy punt,
modelled on the Savage Jabiru.

Well, that was a longwinded
introduction to the current model
Savage Jabiru, which really turned our
heads when we looked at them down
at Coomera recently.

Telwater have taken over this iconic
brand and have refined the features
that made it famous nearly a quarter of
a century ago.

BUILD QUALITY

Inherent strength in the design has
come about with the way the gunwales

are rolled and pressed. They are wide
and while curved around the outside
edge, the inside edge is straight fore
to aft with the underside of the inside
edge rolled up underneath.

The forward casting deck is
constructed from carpeted waterproof
laminated timber and hosts three
hatches, the front two give access the
front of the bilge. The central rear hatch
in this platform has a rotomoulded
insert riveted into it, which is bunged
and drains into the bilge. This is in
effect a live-fish tank, but the guys in
the Territory are going to go to town on
this by removing it and insulating the
void before riveting it back into place.
As you cannot get a one metre barra

into it, you may as well use it to keep
the beer cold!

A seat post base is recessed into the
casting platform for an optional extra
seat or one from the main deck. The
gunwales on either side of the casting
deck have low handrails, which stop
short of the bow of the hull.

There's no cleat to tie an anchor off;
one is restricted to tying off to the
rail on the forequarter. This is not a
comfortable setup when anchored in
chop as it puts the boat slightly side
on to oncoming waves. A stand alone
cleat, or bollard, on the bow would be
ideal, or running the handrails forward
to the bow point would also be a quick
way around this minor issue.



For two anglers with a bit of
gear, the Savage 435 Jabiru Pro is a much
safer fishing alternative.



ATA-GLANCE

Type: V-nose punt
Ride: Calm-water baot
Fishability: Excellent
Tow vehicle: Sedan
Overall comfort: Good
Economy: Very good
Value for money: Very good
Price as tested: \$14,150
Contact: Visit www.telwater.com

WHAT WE LIKED

- ✓ Good hull strength
- ✓ Stable when dead in the water
- ✓ No paintwork to scratch if you are prone to being a little rough with gear

NOT SO MUCH

- ✗ Needs a central anchor tie-off cleat or bollard on bow point
- ✗ Non-slip material, such as tape, or checkerplate on the bow point topside would be ideal
- ✗ Cockpit passenger handrail needs to be moved forward to within reach

“THE 40HP TWO-STROKE MERCURY PROVIDES PLENTY OF PUNCH TO GET THE JABIRU OUT OF THE HOLE WITH TWO ADULTS ONBOARD”

The foredeck is flat sheet, which could do with some non-slip tape added to it. While it might be an option to recess an anchor well here, it would be shallow and require a hatch, so that the ground tackle can't fly out when riding over rough water, or towing over similar terrain.

As the tiller arm on the outboard motor swings well to port, the seat base for the cockpit passenger is well forward of that of the skipper and puts their portside grabrail out of reach behind them. This needs to be moved forward for practical reasons.

The short rear-casting platform runs abeam hard against the transom and the retainer for the skipper's chair post is fixed to its front bulkhead. This


platform has two slide-out hatch tops, one each side, that access voids that will take two 22lt tote tanks. With the helm chair placed elsewhere, and the tiller arm folded up, this is a good raised area from which to cast lures.

MERCURY POWER

The 40hp two-stroke Mercury provides plenty of punch to get the Jabiru out of the hole with two adults onboard. Semi-flat bottom punt style boats don't need much anyway as they have plenty of planing surface, so if budget is an issue you could come back to perhaps 25hp if carrying light loads; 30hp would be comfortable.

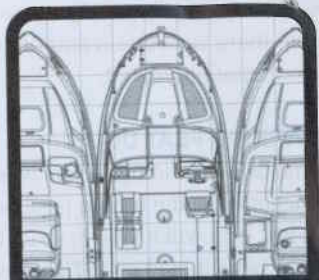
We thought the outboard could have been tuned a little better as it was running rough at slow planing speeds, but overall it made the boat perform well, being easy to steer in tight fast situations.

Later tests showed a WOT speed of just under 33kts at 5500rpm, and cruise of 18kts will have the Mercury running at 3500rpm.

With a few changes topside, this boat is destined for some great stable fishing right around this country. 



Livebait well, tote fuel tanks, rodholders, and large forward casting platform is a huge step forward from your basic tinnie for lure tossers.



SAVAGE 435 JABIRU

HOW MUCH?

Price as tested: \$14,150
Options fitted: nil

GENERAL

Type: Semi-flat bottom
V-nosed punt
Material: Aluminium;
2mm bottom sides,
1.6mm topsides
Length overall: 4.35m
Beam: 1.84m
Depth: 0.72m
Weight: 222kg (hull)

CAPACITIES

Rec. max. HP: 40
Rec. min. HP: 30
Rec. max. engine weight: 120kg
People: Four to 300kg
Max. payload plus engine: 480kg
Fuel: Tote tanks

ENGINE

Make/model: ... Mercury 40hp LW
Type: Carburetted
three-cylinder two-stroke
Rated HP: 40
Displacement: 697cc
Weight: 69kg
Gearbox ratio: 2.00:1
Propeller: 13in alloy
VELS Rating: 1 Star

SUPPLIED BY

Telwater, 53 Waterway Drive,
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Website: www.telwater.com

TO OWN THIS BOAT

Price as tested \$14,150
Weekly repayment \$39.75 TAP
Deposit 30% = \$4245
Final Payment 30% = \$4245
Term 60 mths

* Customer rate is 11.72%, comparison rate is 13.99% for all of the above payments. See rear of magazine for conditions



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