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# SHOW OF FORCE

With wins all over the world, Force boats are legendary on the ski race circuit. John Ford found their latest social ski boat hard to hand back at the end of the day.



## WEATHER CONDITIONS

Wind: 1-3kts  
Sea: Flat



**W**ould I own this boat? As a boat-testing marine journalist, it's a question I often ask myself. But in the case of this Force F19X Social Stern drive, the answer is easier than usual. Let me put it this way: I'd give up my firstborn to see it permanently garaged underneath my house. Mind you, my firstborn has long left home, and I think even he would see it as a fair swap.

While some of the Force boats previously seen in these pages have been rip-roaring speed machines, this new offering is much more refined, yet still fast and thrilling when let off the leash. Match that with a sparkling and flawless finish and you can start to see why it left a yearning place in my soul.

Force boats are built to order in a small factory on the banks of NSW's Hawkesbury River, Western Sydney's water ski playground and home to the annual bridge-to-bridge race. More

works of art than boats, everything that leaves the Force factory is customised to the owner's specification from a list of options that only include best quality components. And while much consultation with the customer goes into the build, there is still space for Force's main man Rod Bickerton to weave his magic, giving each some personality.

## HERITAGE LISTED

A ski-racing heart and heritage of race wins around the world are what pump life into all Force boats. This new vessel has that DNA, but it has been toned down to create a social ski boat that won't bite an unskilled driver. Years of development have gone into the design, creating hulls that are fine-tuned for peak performance across a range of water conditions.

This social F19X comes out of the same mould as the race boats, but it doesn't need to keep weight down with exotic

**"I'd give up my firstborn to see this boat garaged underneath my house"**



Rear-facing passengers can easily keep an eye on the skier.





A simple dash clearly displays all the info you need.

materials, so a combination of iso-resin and vinyl ester is hand laid into a solid glass hull with foam sandwich floor and stringers. No timber here.

This F19X has a brilliantly white, low-slung hull with metalflake silver trim that is painstakingly applied into the gel-coat — in a process Rod says gives him nightmares — until the hull pops out of the mould. It's worth the insomnia, however, because the result is pretty much perfect. Little touches like this are what make the boat special.

A sharp bow entry gradually flares out to the cockpit, where driver and observer seats are set low at the front with two corner seats either side of the engine bay and a central lounge in front. This

new rear lounge treatment gives 100mm more cockpit space. The seats are quality white vinyl with silver trim, themed to match the hull. Carpet covers the inside hull liner which, according to Rod, takes seven-days to cut and fit in order to achieve the sort of finish he wants.

There is a simple silver dash panel in front of the driver, with data from a GPS and the Mercury 377 MAG engine supplying all the information you would need; details about speed, fuel used, fuel flow, and so on can easily be read on the computer panel in the speedo. The tachometer panel is home to all information regarding engine diagnostics, and this is backed up with separate gauges for fuel and trim. Controls for the sound system

are placed out of the way below the dash.

A silver wind deflector across the dash takes the place of a screen, and because the seats are set so low it does a good job of sending the breeze overhead when under way. The well-crafted bimini that protects the front passengers is an item not found on most Force boats.

The driver's seat is a comfortable bucket with good lateral support and a slide for plenty of leg room. To keep an eye on skiers, the passenger gets a rear-facing seat with thickly-upholstered padding along the side. Storage in the bow is accessed through a fold-down section in the passenger backrest and there is more storage under seats and in a ski locker along the side decks.

### On the plane...

- ✓ Superb finish
- ✓ Handling and ride is excellent
- ✓ Power on tap
- ✓ Race pedigree

### Dragging the chain...

- ✗ Could be louder

## A FAMILY FORCE

A close inspection of this family boat reveals a few options that give away its true nature.



If the F19X is a well-mannered but athletic achiever of the Force family, the 21S we tested on the same day is its testosterone-powered big brother with a short temper. When owner Shane Crook took it home to the family he was able to pass it off as the new ski boat for everyone. But looks can be deceiving...

That's not to say the boat lacks finesse. The 21S has Force's usual detail and stunning good looks, along with loads of room in the 6.5m hull. And with the outboard in the back, the cockpit is all open space. There is a driver and (reversible) passenger seat, and the rear lounge across the transom can seat three.

The white with black trim of the hull is carried through to the double-stitched and immaculately finished interior vinyl upholstery. With a deep 21° deadrise and a system of lifting foils and stepped chines, the hull shares a shape with Force race boats. While not put together to the same lightweight specifications, the boat is still solidly built with hand-laid solid directional glass with foam sandwich stringers and floor.

Details such as the left foot throttle and 250hp engine right-foot trim control give away the boat's speed potential. The jacking plate and twin ram hydraulic steering and outrigger bars mounted off the power head give very direct steering, which Shane says is needed to keep the boat under control at speed. He says the outboard is much lighter compared to a stern drive and the boat rides higher out of the water, causing the boat to chine walk as it lifts up on the outboard.

When it was time for me to take the 21S for a spin I settled in behind the Momo wheel and surveyed the layout which, with the same low seating and feet-forward driving position, is similar to the 19X. Gauges are easy to read and have the full Smartcraft and GPS information.

### TRAILERBOAT RATES THE FORCE 21S SKI-RACE

1 Fun factor	👍👍👍👍👍
2 Innovation	👍👍👍👍👍
3 Design and layout	👍👍👍👍👍
4 Quality of finish	👍👍👍👍👍
5 Handling and ride	👍👍👍👍👍
6 Stability at rest	👍👍👍👍👍
7 Ergonomics	👍👍👍👍👍
8 Standard equipment	👍👍👍👍👍
9 Value for money	👍👍👍👍👍
10 X-Factor	👍👍👍👍👍
OVERALL	👍👍👍👍👍

There is the option to use either the hand or feet controls for throttle and trim, but I would suggest you use your feet. I'll explain later.

The boat planes at 13kts (24kmh) at 2500rpm then jumps to 21kts (39kmh) at 3000 as it flattens out. This is all good until to 5000rpm, when the scenery starts slipping by fairly quickly at 48kts (89kmh). The steering feels quite heavy even as the motor is trimmed, then it all gets a little rough.

The stories Shane told me of boats chine

walking their way to disaster started creeping into my mind as the boat became unstable, rolling from side to side. And you want to use the foot trim control because you'll likely be too scared to take your hand from the wheel. Wide-open throttle is 6000rpm and it's a sweaty-palmed ride to an exhilarating 60kts (112kph).

These boats are designed to travel at 120mph, towing a couple of skiers, but a flat-out run in the 21S was a thrill. And the fact the family can go out all day makes it all the sweeter.

Above and below: The outboard engine means the 21S has plenty of room throughout.



## FORCE 21S SKI-RACE

### HOW MUCH?

**Price as tested:** \$82,000 (on trailer)  
**Options fitted:** Foot throttle; foot trim control; carbon wind deflector; outrigger bars  
**Priced from:** \$68,000

### GENERAL

**Type:** Ski race monohull  
**Material:** Fibreglass  
**Length:** 6.5m  
**Beam:** 2.1m  
**Weight:** 1690kg BMT  
**Deadrise:** 21°

### CAPACITIES

**People:** 6  
**Rec. HP:** 250  
**Max. HP:** 350  
**Fuel:** 170L

### ENGINE:

**Make/model:** Mercury Optimax Pro XS

**Type:** Two-stroke, direct injection V6  
**Weight:** 229kg  
**Displacement:** 3032cc  
**Gear ratio:** 1.75:1

### TO OWN THIS BOAT

**Base price:** \$68,000  
**Weekly repayment:** \$222.23

\*This is based on a 7.9% (8.2% Comparative rate), 10% deposit, 30% residual and a 5year term (TAP)

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### On the plane...

- ✓ Speed, thrills and fun
- ✓ Well finished
- ✓ Lots of room

### Dragging the chain...

- ✗ Needs more power (yep, I'm hooked)





Above: A shiny white low-slung hull makes for a great-looking boat on the water.

Below: The F19X's 320hp Mercury in-board comfortably flies up to 75kmh.



#### TRAILERBOAT RATES THE FORCE F19X SOCIAL STERNDRIIVE

1 Fun factor	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
2 Innovation	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
3 Design and layout	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
4 Quality of finish	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
5 Handling and ride	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
6 Stability at rest	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
7 Ergonomics	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
8 Standard equipment	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
9 Value for money	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
10 X-Factor	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
OVERALL	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥

#### PERFORMANCE

9.5kts (17kmh) @ 1800rpm  
— on the plane  
15.6kts (29kmh) @ 2000rpm  
26kts (48kmh) @ 2500rpm  
34kts (63kmh) @ 3000rpm  
40kts (74kmh) @ 3500rpm  
46kts (85kmh) @ 4000rpm  
52kts (96kmh) @ 4500rpm  
56kts (104kmh) @ 5000rpm

At the stern, there are steps and swim platforms with carbon fibre inserts either side of the motor, and a fresh water shower to port. In another neat example of attention to detail, the transom is hand-finished to create a seamless join between the hull and deck moulds (anodised gunwale strips along the sides cover this join).

#### DOWN TO BUSINESS

When we finally started our blast up the river, the boat fitted me like a glove — the seat wrapped around to hold me securely in place. My legs stretched out to the Mercury Big Foot throttle and the Italian Isotta steering wheel was well placed to throw the boat lock-to-lock without getting tangled up. The motor turned over at the first punch of the starter and emitted a subdued V8 rumble.

The digital throttle and trim system clicked into gear easily. There is an option for throttle control from either the side-mounted hand control or the peddle under the right foot, but the foot seems the most natural for the full rev-head experience. With 320hp on tap, there is plenty of

acceleration and the boat lifts momentarily before taking off on the easily-driven hull.

The 19X planes at 9kts (16.5kmh) at 1800rpm, but it's quickly up on its running strakes, pulling 26kts (48kmh) at 2500rpm. Put the boot in and 40kts (74kmh) comes up quickly, with almost no speed sensation as the wind deflector directs the breeze overhead. The weight of the in-board keeps the boat low at the stern and gives a feeling it's stuck to the water speed and into full-on turns.

Steering is light but direct, with good feedback through the Ride Guide cable power assist steering. We did not run the fresh engine to full revs out of respect to the new owner, but it was later tested to 65kts (120kmh) after a run-in period.

#### THE WRAP

I've already given away the fact I loved the Force 19X, and while a weapon like this is hardly a boat for the masses, it probably could be. Its quality finish and power are matched to handling and ride that inspire confidence, and it's price point puts it among some more mainstream production boats. 🔥

## FORCE F19X SOCIAL STERNDRIIVE

#### HOW MUCH?

Price as tested: \$95,000  
(including trailer)

Options fitted: Trailer

Priced from: \$86,600

#### GENERAL

Type: Social ski

Material: Fibreglass

Length: 6.05m

Beam: 1.96m

Weight: 1700kg BMT

Deadrise: 22°

#### CAPACITIES

People: 6

Rec. HP: 230

Fuel: 280L

Water: No

#### ENGINE

Make/model: 320hp Mercury

Seacore 377MAG

Type: Fuel-injected V8

Weight: 451kg

Displacement: 6200cc

Gear ratio: 1:1.5

Propeller: 15 5/6in x 22in Bravo

#### MANUFACTURED & SUPPLIED BY

Force Boats

River Road, Lower Portland,  
NSW 2756

Tel: (02) 4575 4038

Web: [www.forceboats.com](http://www.forceboats.com)

#### TO OWN THIS BOAT

Base price: \$86,600

Weekly repayment: \$283.06

*\*This is based on a 7.9% (8.2% Comparative rate), 10% deposit, 30% residual and a 5 year term (TAP)*

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