

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

AUSSIE TALENT AND DESIGN SKILLS HONED IN COMPETITION ALLOW THIS 24FT
SPORTSBOAT TO FORCE THE ISSUE WITH HER IMPORTED OPPONENTS





Far left: The Aussie-made F24B takes on the competition like never before; Above centre: Up to eight adults can be comfortably accommodated; Below centre: Plenty of space in the bow; Above top: Only the finest quality materials are used during manufacture; Above left: The four-speaker Clarion stereo and CD player has dual controls that also allow it to be controlled from the swim platform; Above: a classy DVD player will keep the kids happy.

Aussie, Aussie, Aussie... Oi! Oi! Oi! When talking about Rod and Kelly Bickerton's Force Boats, you can use no truer catch phrase. This Aussie boat-building team's "true blue" — through and through.

However, take a closer look at the performance sportsboat market they operate in and you'll see there's an "import" invasion taking place, thanks to the "Sub-Prime" debacle that decimated the US market. This isn't all bad, because it creates competition, but while local builders are keen to take on the imports, it takes plenty of skill and vision to not only challenge, but also compete and exceed the standards set by the imports.

AUSSIE DREAM TEAM

There's no doubt in my mind that the Australian "dream team" at Force Boats,

not only has the skills and vision to compete, but also beat the opposition at all levels. Force Boats is renowned for creating high-quality sportsboats and its latest creation — the F24B Stern-drive Bowrider — definitely exceeds the standards set by the foreign boats.

So, how do they do it? By having a dedicated team who raised the bar in boat design and combined vacuum bagging and handlaid construction with close attention to detail.

On the water the beautiful Force F25B is a real head turner with her bold red, black and silver hull and high-quality fitout. There's ample custom-designed seating for up to eight adults and plenty of obligatory cupholders to keep drinks close at hand.

ONLY THE BEST

This Australian-made boat uses only the

finest-quality Australian and imported materials and products — like her white Italian-leather Isotta steering wheel — to complement the F24B's sleek profile and aggressive style.

Every consideration has been addressed by the design of the F24B; there's even a drain in the bow with a remote bilge pump, in the off chance that spray or rain comes onboard. She has pop-up navigation lights for cruising at night, a carpeted and lined cabin with lighting and a roof-mounted Clarion DVD player to keep the kids amused. The cabin is large enough for adults and is protected from the elements by two carbon-fibre bow doors, which also stop thr wind from bothering passengers in the stern.

The custom-built rear engine hatch lifts on electric/gas struts and offers additional storage space that's sectioned

off to keep loose objects from falling under the engine. The four-speaker Clarion stereo and CD player also has dual controls that are easily accessed from the built-in swim platform or the padded sunlounge.

Turn the key and the 496HO V8 DTS MerCruiser roars into life. It sounds like thunder bursting through the stainless steel US-made Rex Marine exhaust system and leaves you with no doubts that this boat is built for speed.

PERFORMANCE AND HANDLING

Underway, this sleek 24ft bowrider moved effortlessly along the Hawkesbury River. Her holeshot was impressive with almost no lag time from rest to plane. She cruised comfortably at 26.1kts, pulling 2200rpm and using 27lt/h. At that rate you could cruise all day on her 300lt underfloor fibreglass

WHAT WE LIKED

- ✓ Highest quality construction and superb finish
- ✓ Ultra-smooth ride
- ✓ Supreme handling
- ✓ Priced right on the market
- ✓ Excellent boat all round

NOT SO MUCH

- ✗ A little tight to enter and exit the cabin

fuel tank.

With the tach hitting 2700rpm, the boat did 34.7kts using 39lt/h. At 3400rpm, the F24B travelled at 43.4kt and used 57lt/h. Moving into the top end of the rev range, at 4000rpm the vessel hit 52.1kts and drank 78lt/h, while at a WOT of 5000rpm she topped out at 64.3kts and used 102lt/h.

At WOT the boat gave me a feeling of security and confidence in her design

and build quality as she handled tight, high-speed turns as easily as if she'd been at cruising speed. This boat's impressive top-end speed will definitely appeal to the enthusiast with a real "need for speed".

TOP BUILD

Built on-site at Lower Portland on the Hawkesbury River, the F24B can boast loads of features including: a one-piece anodised gunwale strip; deck vents; padded and gelcoat side panels in the bow and main cockpit; 300lt-underfloor fibreglass fuel tank; seats with fibreglass shells, plastic bases and stainless steel stapling; hand-finished hull gelcoat with custom graphics; stainless steel cleats; grab handles; bilge outlet; fuel tank breather... even the nuts and bolts are built to last.

All Force Boats are hand-laid using



Above: The V8 MerCruiser's top speed was an impressive 64.3kts; Middle: Tight high-speed turns were no problem even at WOT; Below: Her 300lt tank is more than adequate for a full day of cruising.

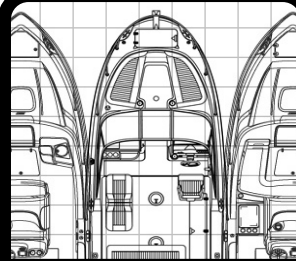
multi-directional fibreglass and Vinylster resins. They're also the only Australian boats built with a vacuumed bagged hull and deck.

With an overall length of 24ft (7.32m), the F24B has plenty of storage in the bow/aft cockpits and cabin for all the family and their associated gear.

The boat is fully equipped and boasts a driver's footrest, which adds to the comfort already provided by the custom-bucket seat on a slide. The passenger's seat is on a swivel, allowing for observation when the boat's used for skiing. There's also an 80lt freshwater tank, freshwater shower, storage netting and a padded sun lounge. Other standard features include: a rear lounge with a built-in esky and added storage; Rex Marine switch panels; stainless steel bilge outlet; pop-up cleats; anodised-ski tow; remote-bilge pump; blower; bow bilge pump; stainless steel fuel-tank breather; and fire port.

THE WRAP UP

This 100 per cent Australian-made and designed sportsboat is built with the best materials available from around the world. She's a full-on performance package. Her sleek design and smooth lines hide the beast within, but when unleashed, it gives the driver and passengers a sense of exhilaration that's testament to Rod Bickerton's boat-building skills. ⚡



HOW MUCH?

Price as tested: ... \$134,000, plus trailer of choice

Priced from: ...Standard package priced from \$74,000 (not including motor)

GENERAL

Length overall: 7.32m
Beam: 2.15m
Min HP: 320hp
Max HP: 1200hp
Gear Box Ratio: 1:3.6
Propeller: 24in Bravo I

CAPACITIES

Fuel: 300lt
Fresh water: 80lt
People: Eight adults

ENGINE

Make/Model: V8 496 HO MerCruiser
Rated HP: 425hp with DTS

SUPPLIED BY

Force Boats,
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Website: www.forceboats.com

TO OWN THIS BOAT

Price as tested: \$134,000
Weekly repayment: \$ 328.92
Deposit: 30%
Final Payment: 30% = \$40,200
Term: 60 mths
See rear of magazine for conditions



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