



**BOAT TEST:** FORMOSA 580 TOMAHAWK  
**STORY & PHOTOS:** RICK HUCKSTEPP

THE TOMAHAWK 580

COMBINES EXCEPTIONAL

HULL STRENGTH WITH

A TOP ASSORTMENT OF

STANDARD FEATURES.

RICK HUCKSTEPP REPORTS



**E**stablished in Brisbane during 1998, Formosa Marine has spent the last decade building a name for itself in the plate-boat industry. The Tomahawk range is the culmination of all that development and the 580 model makes a good first impression.

The Formosa 580 Tomahawk hosts standard features that are normally optional extras on many similarly-sized vessels. The strength of the hulls is excellent, with 4mm gauge, 5083-grade high-tensile plate used in the hull for both top and bottom sides.

The 580 has a raised sheerline in the forequarters that gives her a racy look and provides extra spray deflection when underway with wind on the forequarters. Further comfort at sea comes in the form of a steep deadrise from the keel line to gunwales in the forequarters, which run

further forward than on many similar boats before rounding to the bowsprit. Its shaped hull is a clear winner in lousy seas and is typical of Formosa designs right from the outset. Surprisingly, no other manufacturer has tried to emulate it.

**STURDY BUILD**

Although the forward third of the Tomahawk's hull is smooth, there are a number of strakes aft to control sideslip during hard and fast manoeuvring. To minimise roll, full-reversed chines wing the rounded aft hull bottom, which is set at 17 degrees.

Support for the coamings and bracing for the side sheets are also different to

the norm. Rather than have the usual multitude of ribs extending from the deck, the 580 has fewer box section ribs that measure about 100 x 90mm in diameter. They second as "conduits in places" and take wiring looms around the vessel to and from the helm station. Extra strength and rigidity comes in the form of gussets installed from the inside of the ribs to the inner edge of the coamings.

The transom has been designed with a three-quarter deep walkthrough section on the portside, which is closed off by a Nylon door. Midships on the transom bulkhead is a bait-rigging table permanently fixed and with its fore and aft sections sheeted to form a



IMPRESSIONS  
 THAT LAST



Clockwise from below left: The 580 Tomahawk is built to catch much bigger fish than this tiddler; Inward sloping cabin sides makes going forward on the walkaround deck a breeze; A red and white livery with stylish decals has the Formosa looking the part; Helm dash is minimalist and limits the addition of big-screen electronics; Raised sheerline in the forequarters gives the boat a racy look and provides extra spray deflection.



**WHAT WE LIKED**

- ✓ Foam filling comes standard
- ✓ Good beamy boat
- ✓ Stable and dry
- ✓ Robust construction

**NOT SO MUCH**

- ✗ The brow style instrumentation dash it needs rethinking if you want big cabinet electronics



a hinged Nylon-cutting board. This had a bunged, but was not plumbed on the test boat; however, it's something that shouldn't be too difficult set up. Four rodholders also bristle from the edges of this structure.

The transom bulkhead not only houses the oil reservoir for the E-TEC engine, but also the battery, fuel-priming bulb and fuel filter. The bottom of the bulkhead is well off the deck, allowing for easy foot-under access and cleaning should rubbish find its way to the rear of the deck. Rectangular scuppers exhaust water through the fastback edges of the hull.

**FANCY ENGINEERING**

There's no shortage of over-engineered handrails on the Formosa 580, with 32mm rails found in all the right places. And speaking of over-engineering, check out the boarding steps.

To the rear of the cockpit

is a beamy, under-deck killtank. It's long enough to hold a large mackerel or other difficult-to-stow items like paddles.

Moving forward, the centre cabin sits on a raised foredeck with the deck inside rebated to cockpit sole level and a deeper rebate in the cab itself. The cabin walls slope in toward the centre of the boat providing room for the upper torso when traversing the walkaround. This means there's ample space to run around and chase fish while you to hang on to the surrounding bowrails.

The sloping roof of the cab is also relatively flat. While the look may appear odd to some who expect rounded features on such a superstructure, the practical advantage is it's an excellent place to stow gear like swags and crab pots. A handrail running at its forward edge, abeam, would make this easier.

The basic anchorwell doesn't have a hatch, but it is large enough to hold a few hundred metres of rope, chain and ground tackle, plus any anchor-lifting float devices a boatie may carry.

Several large tubular footrests assist the

skipper and navigator seated on modules that have apertures on the inside edge for stowing gear. The inside of the cab is not that spacious; however, because it's designed primarily for the dry storage of gear with ease of access, at a pinch a couple of people could shelter here during inclement weather.

**BROW-STYLE INSTRUMENTATION**

The targa that extends up from the aft walls of the centre cab supports a hardtop that's loaded with rod tubes and the sail tracks used to attach a set of clears. There are ample handrails for those standing behind the seating when running to sea and the entire top section can be hinged back into the cockpit to reduce wind drag when towing and for storing the boat under a low car port or in a garage.

The instrumentation at the helm is minimal. It consists of two gauges housed in a small brow immediately behind the wheel that display all the functions of the Evinrude E-TEC. On the fascia underneath where the helm is installed, is a large blank panel to port, where extra





Clockwise from this photo: The Tomahawk is rated to 150hp, but the E-TEC 130 proved more than capable; Transom has a hatched-battery compartment set well above the sole; The hull got a hammering on test day and passed with flying colours; Permanent bait station has an internal livebait tank.



instrumentation can also be fitted.

Unfortunately, it would be almost impossible to install a gimbal-mounted GPS/depthsounder, with a reasonable 15cm screen or more, in front of the skipper. However, one would happily fit diagonally across in front of the passenger and remain within reach of the helm. More room could be made available for electronics by mounting the instruments down the portside of the wheel with the current instrument brow being simply left out of the equation.

**SMOOTH PERFORMANCE**

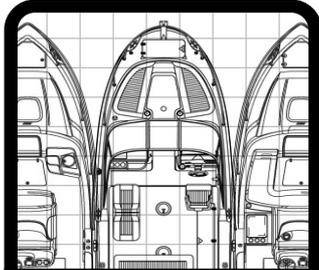
Fitted with an Evinrude 130hp E-TEC outboard, and with two adults onboard, the Formosa 580 Tomahawk showed plenty

of promise throughout the power band. It would be overkill to fit the maximum horsepower recommendation of 150 on this boat, unless you intend to carry either a regular heavy payload or seven passengers — the maximum rating for the 580.

At 5600rpm, 34kts was reached very quickly and manoeuvrability was excellent. A most welcome addition was the Seastar hydraulic steering, which comes standard.

On test day we had a 5kts breeze and a low swell. We hammered this hull as much as we could in the slight conditions and it passed all the tests with flying colours.

In short, the Formosa Tomahawk is a good vessel with standard features that will be appreciated by its users.



FORMOSA 580 TOMAHAWK

**HOW MUCH?**  
 Price as tested: ..... \$52,990  
 Options fitted:.....hardtop visor, coloured paint, baitboard tank, plumbed killtank, Humminbird GPS/sounder and VHF radio  
 Priced from: ..... \$47,990

**GENERAL**  
 Material:.. 5083 high-tensile plate; 4mm top and bottom sides  
 Length: .....6m  
 Beam: ..... 2.45m  
 Deadrise: ..... 17 Degrees  
 Weight: .....760kg

**CAPACITIES**  
 Fuel:.....200lt  
 Rec. max. HP:..... 150hp  
 Rec. min. HP:..... 115hp  
 People day:.....7  
 Max. transom weight:.....220kg

**ENGINE**  
 Make/model: ..Evinrude E-TEC 130  
 Type:.... Fuel-injected two-stroke  
 Rated HP: ..... 130hp  
 Displacement:.....1727cc  
 Weight: .....177kg  
 Propeller:..... 17in S/S Viper  
 VELS rating:.....3-Star

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