

FORMOSA TOMAHAWK 740 ENCLOSED



This article is provided courtesy of BlueWater Boats & Sportsfishing magazine. It originally appeared in Issue 129, 2018.

BlueWater
Boats & Sportsfishing
www.bluewatermag.com.au



"A 7.6m overall length and a street-legal 2.5m beam give the new model full-size bunks."

CUTTING THROUGH

Formosa's new 740 is a towable offshore fishing platform with loads of space, and the security and comfort of a fully enclosed cabin. John Ford reviews the first of these new models, fresh from the factory.

Formosa Marine is a true-blue Australian boat manufacturer, with their new Tomahawk Offshore 740 Enclosed expanding on their range of bluewater fishing weapons, as well as boasting sparkling performance and handling.

Run by Ross Stephens and Duncan Blakely from their Tingalpa factory to the east of Brisbane, the family-owned business employs around 35 fabricators and fitters. At last estimates they turn out around 250 boats annually, across a range that extends from hardcore 4.8m barra boats through to the beefy 7.6m offshore Tomahawk on review.

Formosa Marine was established in 1998 and started out with a range of modest pressed aluminium boats. Since then they have sought to strengthen the build to concentrate on offshore fishing boats, turning to plate-alloy construction 10 years ago. They subsequently introduced a new design featuring the distinctive raised sheerline and unusually sculptured high chine line at the bow, still seen throughout the range today.

THE LITTLE BIG GAMEBOAT

Jason Graham from Aussie Boat Sales told me he worked with the factory to design a trailerboat to

rival anything else in terms of size and features. He saw an opportunity to grow sales to owners of larger gameboats who wanted to downsize to a capable vessel that would be cheaper to run yet still have the comforts of an enclosed cabin and a cockpit able to handle a full crew for big fish.

Rather than merely extending the existing Offshore 700, the latest model is an all-new design with a sleeker look, thanks to an extended cabin and greater rake in the windscreen. Along the way, the more substantial layout also received a bigger fuel tank, increased deadrise to 20 degrees, 6cm higher sides

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The pair of Honda 150hp 4-strokes delivered a quiet ride with a top speed of 71kph (38kts) and a range of 214km.

The cockpit's high sides provide support when fighting fish in rough conditions, and metal seats along both sides fold down for use, revealing hidden storage pockets.

the uncluttered space provides a clean work area. At the centre of the transom, an extensive and well-considered bait station has six rodholders and a metal lid protecting two nylon cutting boards either side of an opening to a giant plumbed livebait tank. Lips around the cutting boards prevent cut bait falling in with the livebait, and sturdy arms on the table make it strong enough to brace against and also eliminate any vibration when underway. When the lid for the livebait tank is lowered, rubber gaskets seal the tank for travelling.

Two raised hatches under the bait table house the batteries well above any moisture, with a washdown hose provided in the starboard corner to keep the area shipshape. A metal cover prevents tackle tangling with the water hose and electrics leading to the bait station. It certainly makes a nice touch and helps keeps the area neat.

Metal seats along the sides – each with room for two passengers – have soft cushion covers and fold out of the way for fishing. Storage pockets are hidden by the seats and will soak up loads of tackle or safety equipment. Further forward are tackle storage drawers either side and compartments against the cabin walls, housing a sink with freshwater tap to starboard and a 50L slide-out Waeco 12v fridge to port.

LOCK-UP SECURITY

Lockable bi-fold aluminium-framed glass doors give access to the fully enclosed helm, which offers enormous head height. The wrap-around glass windows provide easy vision and also help keep the space bright and airy.

Two black vinyl helm chairs with armrests sit on sturdy aluminium boxes, with storage bins to port and a 65L upright fridge under the driver. The passenger gets a handy grabrail, lockable glovebox and a side storage bin, while forward of the helm is a narrow dash for two 10cm Garmin screens for the engines and a panel of six switches for accessories. Two 25.4cm Garmin XSV touchscreens for sounder and GPS are bracket-mounted on the dash in ready line of sight. The sounder features full CHIRP through a 1kw transducer.

A central opening in the helm enclosure leads down a step to the cabin, which converts to side bunks or a full infill, giving you the choice of a large sitting area or a monster bed. A roof hatch in the cabin opens for quick access to the bow, which is fitted with a 3.2cm diameter alloy bowrail, a lazer-cut Formosa badge on a short bowsprit and an anchor well ready for your choice of winch.

TWIN HONDA 4-STROKES

Our test boat was the first production hardtop model, so the Aussie Boat Sales crew were as keen as I was to see how it performed with the pair of Honda 150hp 4-strokes as we accelerated out of Pittwater and headed to sea.

These four-cylinder, double overhead cam outboards incorporate four valves per cylinder and a capacity of 2354cc. Weighing 220kg each, they develop their maximum power at 5500rpm and come complete with oxygen sensors to assist the computer-controlled Lean Burn technology to optimise their power delivery and economy. They also feature Honda's innovative Boosted Low Speed Torque ('BLAST') air/fuel ratio and ignition-timing technology, which utilises 'MBT' – Minimum advance for Best Torque – trace control. By linking the ignition timing control to the air/fuel ratio, it sets the optimum timing via computer control. This boost in horsepower and torque at low rpm contributes to strong hole shot performance to get the hull up on plane quickly – ideal for running a river mouth bar. The engines were also quiet, smooth and odour-free right through the rev range.

SPORTY PERFORMANCE

Helm seating was comfortable and secure, offering an excellent relationship to controls and the sporty, narrow diameter wheel. The throttles are set high enough on the dash for easy adjustment, with the digital system clicking the Hondas into gear without fuss. Sliding side windows together with a hatch in the enclosure's roof admitted a fresh flow of air as we got underway.

Acceleration was sporty, with a quick transition onto the plane at an efficient 20kph at 2800rpm, and with very little bow rise. A low-speed cruise at 3500rpm took us out at 37kph, with a fuel usage of 27.6L/ph for both engines. This gave us a theoretical range of 361km from the 300L tank with 10% in reserve.

By 5000rpm we had 56kph and fuel usage of 64L/ph. Wide-open throttle had the Hondas producing a lovely crescendo at 71kph (38kts) and a range of 214km. At speed the boat was rock-steady in the water, with no vibration or resonance through the hull and only the occasional tinny slap to remind us of the hull's metal fabrication.

Steering through the hydraulic SeaStar system was light, and handling in sheltered waters was smooth and precise. There was nothing untoward even in full power turns, where the twin screws bit in and drove powerfully through the curves.

INTO THE CHOP

As we headed offshore we cut through a sharp 1m sea on a low swell, which the big Formosa took in its stride, landing softly over some of the sharper waves. Despite the sloppy conditions, we were able to maintain speeds of around 43kph without feeling uncomfortable.

The rig's price as tested is \$165,000 ready to go, representing good value for a large-capacity trailerboat with twin-engine setup and quality electronics. The Tomahawk 740's enclosed cabin and expansive deck layout will be a real winner for anglers keen to head wide in a vessel providing excellent weather protection.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Large-capacity enclosed cabin.
- Plenty of fishing room in a spacious cockpit.
- Lively performance and good sea manners.



Behind the cabin are storage compartments, a sink with freshwater tap and a 50L slide-out Waeco 12v fridge. Lockable bi-fold doors secure the fully enclosed cabin with wrap-around glass windows.

> SPEC CHECK

FORMOSA TOMAHAWK 470 ENCLOSED CABIN

PERFORMANCE			
Speed	RPM	Fuel (per engine)	Range
2kph	800rpm	1.2L/ph	225km
7kph	1000rpm	2.1L/ph	450km
10kph	1500rpm	3L/ph	450km
13kph	2000rpm	5.4L/ph	325km
17kph	2500rpm	7.8L/ph	294km
20kph	2800rpm	9.3L/ph (on the plane)	290km
27kph	3000rpm	10.8L/ph	337km
37kph	3500rpm	13.8L/ph	361km
43kph	4000rpm	16.5L/ph	351km
52kph	4500rpm	23L/ph	305km
56kph	5000rpm	32L/ph	236km
65kph	5500rpm	41L/ph	214km
71kph	6000rpm	47L/ph	203km

PRICED FROM
\$140,000

PRICE AS TESTED
\$165,000

OPTIONS FITTED
Twin engines, electronics package, two fridges and more.

GENERAL
Type: Enclosed cabin monohull
Material: 5083 plate aluminium alloy, 5mm bottom, 4mm sides.
Length: 7.6m Beam: 2.5m
Hull Weight: 1450kg Deadrise: 20 degrees

CAPACITIES
People: 7 Max. HP: 300 Fuel: 300L

ENGINE
Make/model: 2 x Honda BF150 outboards
Type: Four-cylinder fuel-injected 4-stroke
Weight: 220kg each Displacement: 2354cc
Gear ratio: 2.14:1 Propeller: 43cm Solas 4-blade

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"The engines were quiet, smooth and odour-free right through the rev range."

and an enclosed hardtop. It was also essential to make room at the transom for a twin-engine setup.

Settling on a 7.6m overall length and a street-legal 2.5m beam gave the new model full-size bunks and a cockpit as big as or better than any rival. It also did away with the need for the wide-load towing permits often associated with American imports of this size.

BUILT TOUGH

Like its stablemates, the 740 is built solidly with an underfloor structure using boxed ribs and full-length longitudinal stringers with lateral cross structures, all of which are fully welded to the 5mm 5083 alloy bottom plate. Before the floor is lowered in and sealed to the sides, the void below the deck is foam-filled for positive buoyancy and sound deadening.

Our test rig's twin 150hp Honda 4-stroke outboards took the test boat to the 740 Tomahawk's maximum 300hp rating. The swim platforms seen on the single-engine setup of previous Formosa models have been reduced to narrow steps clad in heavy-duty non-skid material, with the port side featuring a folding ladder and lockable transom gate.

SPACIOUS COCKPIT WITH FRIDGE

Once in the cockpit, the high sides are immediately noticeable, and I'm sure they will be appreciated by anglers when fighting fish in rough conditions. When looking at the 740 Tomahawk from outside, the extra freeboard appears exaggerated due to the self-draining deck also being above the waterline, but any fears that a higher centre of gravity might affect handling or static stability were soon put to rest when we headed to sea.

The large cockpit is covered in grey marine carpet and