

NAFA on boats

HydraCraft Xtreme

It's not so long ago that most people would recognise a GS Marine boat because so many of the Top End's gun fishing guides used them. The continuing popularity of GS Marine's original AquaRat and HydraCraft boats in the tough world of professional guiding speaks volumes about their longevity.

Last year, GS Marine released a complementary range of boats from 4.7 to 7.3 m that they called Xtreme. Xtreme hulls look much the same as their predecessors, that is they come in both the bluff-bowed AquaRat and pointed bow HydraCraft styles, but are aimed more at recreational fishing than guiding or commercial usage and so aren't quite as industrial in construction.

They're still pretty substantial; Xtreme hulls have 4 mm plate for the hull's bottom sheet and their sides are pressed from 3 mm. Their internal framework is tied to a massive 100 mm X 6 mm full-length internal keel bar. And their decks are 4 mm plate aluminium.

The new range met with instant success, and very soon GS Marine were, and still are, busy keeping up with demand. Unlike the original AquaRats and HydraCraft though, (which were rarely seen outside the Territory), with the advent of the Xtreme range GS Marine boats have started

popping up all over the place.

I've run into several of them over here on the east coast during the past year, and been mightily impressed. They've all looked fantastic (Xtreme owners seem to have a thing about wild paint jobs), although while looks are important, it's the way their interiors have been put together that really took my fancy.

When the chance came to test an Xtreme for NAFA, we sent Art Director Dave Krantz off camera in hand to look at a 520 Tournament Classic. As a keen lure fisherman himself, Dave came back every bit as impressed as I've been with Xtremes I've seen, happily reporting that he'd at last found a boat capable of storing the number of rods and amount of lures he habitually takes fishing.

The test boat had a rod locker containing no less than 10 rods in secure racks inside a lockable compartment set along the port side. There were also 2 separate tackle lockers, each of which held 5 of those Plano 3407 lure trays — and as if that isn't enough lures, more still can be stowed in an under-deck locker aft of the capacious underfloor (drained overboard) fish pit.

The test boat was a side console, featuring what GS Marine call a Sportzback transom, with a full height aft bulkhead. This boat didn't have an

The GS Marine Xtream running at speed across Darwin Harbour. That poling platform on the transom is a handy addition for flats fishing.



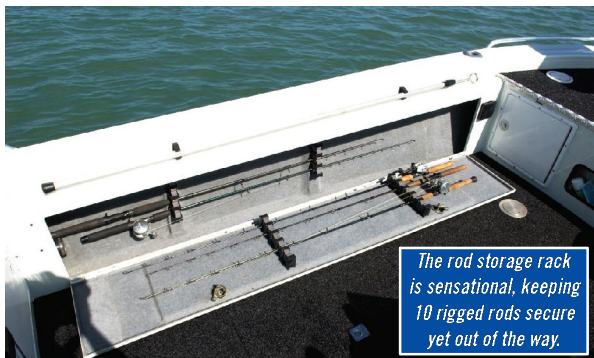
Lure storage facilities on the Xtreme are most impressive. It swallows a whole tackle shop and then some!



aft casting deck, the deck being level from transom to a forward casting deck. This was set up high, nearly at gunwale height.

Across the aft end of the casting deck, where everyone who's ever fished from any GS Marine boat expects to find it, was an enormous hatch accessing a locker containing a big EvaKool icebox. Refrigeration is becoming increasingly popular as an alternative to ice boxes in fishing boats, and there was plenty of room here for a 12/240 V fridge if preferred.

Dave returned to the office starry-eyed about this boat's performance with a 140 Suzuki. A 115 Suzi is standard power for this hull and GS Marine said it actually goes quite well with just a 90.



The rod storage rack is sensational, keeping 10 rigged rods secure yet out of the way.



The side console doesn't intrude on cockpit space and the foot well underneath keeps drivers of all sizes nice and comfortable.



The spacious bow casting platform also hides a big EvaKool icebox.