

NO GAMBLE WITH **BLACKJACK II**

BY KEITH INGRAM



Committing to the purchase of a new build can be a gamble, especially if the intended vessel has no history or pedigree.

Napier is the home of Senator Boats, a company that for many years has quietly got on with building quality fishing vessels – predominantly for the leisure marine and more recently the charter market. Senator was one of the first boat builders to pioneer aluminium pontoon boats in New Zealand and they remain a leading builder of this style of vessel.

Senator vessels have gained a reputation for being well built sea-boats, attracting interest from the commercial workboat industry for high-speed craft that will take on the rough. The company has grown to the point where they now employ a team of boat-builders in their Napier factory with a network of dealers selling Senator boats throughout New Zealand.

The evolution in design and construction, and the ability of Senator to listen to the needs of the commercial boating community has proven to be the key to its success. Being heard is especially important for commercial fishers, who know what they want in a vessel, rather than what the boat builder says they should have.

In response to client demand, Senator's new customised offshore alloy catamaran series was launched with the catamarans now finding favour as commercial charter and cray fishing boats. Their sea-keeping stability, safety, manoeuvrability and power-to-weight ratio for speed are all important factors for their skippers.

The latest custom built vessel for a Wellington-based client is set up for general fishing and passage across the Cook Strait ditch to the Marlborough Sounds.

Constructed in aluminium alloy, the hull design is highly efficient with superior load carrying, stability and storage ability as well as affordability. At 16m with a beam of 5m this boat,



The main helm station

while a metre shorter than the 17m in the Senator range, still has some real estate on board. Standing on the deck the surrounding space is huge.

Built in marine alloy plate to survey, like its larger 17m sister, the 16m *BlackJack II* has an 8mm bottom with 6mm hull sides. Scantlings and frames are all 6mm, with the cabin structure in 4mm and the decks are all 5mm tread plate.

On stepping aboard the vessel, there is a large fenced boarding platform over the jet units, protecting the twin HamiltonJet HJ364 waterjets tucked underneath and providing an ideal safe fishing area. Immediately forward of this, across the transom, is a central island bait station and live bait tank complete with a stainless steel top and sink.

Access to the large cockpit is either side via two transom doors. Once inside, the expanse of the cockpit deck becomes apparent. Below, in either hull under the watertight hatches concealed within their soundproofed machinery spaces are the two D11 670hp Volvo Penta diesels coupled to the waterjet units controlled by the HamiltonJet blueArrow system. This combined power pack will deliver a top speed of 41 knots and a service speed of



A large boarding and fishing platform



Live bait tank and bait station

22 knots at a fuel burn of 100 litres per hour for both motors at 1700rpm. The engines are mounted and connected to the jet units using Beattys drive shafts through Brevini couplings to ensure that no vibration is transferred into the hull. The power units are very smooth in operation. There is a mix of both electric and hand operated bilge pumps throughout the vessel in each void, plus a deck hose.

In the middle of the cockpit is a large teak table that does not require nailing down – it is that heavy. Solid polycarbonate chairs are movable and may be stacked and lashed in the corner when required. The cockpit is large enough to have a dozen anglers fishing with space to swing a fish, as well as providing power sockets for the oldies with electric reels when fishing for groper. Also on the starboard coaming in the cockpit is a small electric warping drum winch with an extendable davit overhead for hauling cray pots and scallop dredges.


The side decks are fenced with handrails wide enough to allow access forward to the foredeck where the anchor is recessed into the wing deck; this is to ensure that the anchor does not stick out beyond the confines of her berth. A small Muir electric capstan is provided to power the anchor setting and recovery. On top of the main cabin is the stowage for the inflatable dinghy plus the radar arch for the aerials.

Looking forward, we see the large deckhouse or main cabin, where the roofline extends aft to provide shelter for the external dining area and a large stainless steel barbecue built into the port side.

Remembering that this boat was built with leisure and parties in mind or as a serious boys' fishing boat, the barbecue is in place of an internal oven in the galley – an easy way to feed big appetites. Besides the external dining area and bench seats there is a further bench to starboard. House batteries are stowed under the cockpit seat and there is a large Alphatron converter to provide 240V power for onboard entertainment and refrigeration under ►

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On the large fo'c'sle



Main house batteries



the small bench seat inside the door. Another small fridge-cum-freezer may also be found under this seat.

Access into the main saloon is afforded by stepping through a double bi-slide door that can be closed at various distances depending on the weather. Immediately inside this door to starboard is an L-shaped galley with a two-burner gas stove, a sink and a workbench with a refrigerator below. Also under the bench is a single domestic dishwasher drawer that takes about seven litres of water per wash cycle.

Opposite, to port, a door gives access to the heads and shower, and forward of this on the port side is the main dinette with two crank-stemmed stools which can be swivelled out of the way, an L-shaped dinette with a wooden-trimmed table and seating for about six people.

Opposite, to starboard, is the main helm station with a large settee style helm seat where two may sit comfortably with all the electronics and controls within easy reach. Visibility from this position is excellent and all round, even considering the minor blind spot just for'ard of the port quarter to less than the beam

where the head is situated. All four corners of the vessel remain clearly visible to the skipper; this with the blueArrow system makes manoeuvring and berthing a breeze.

The electronic package includes a chartplotter, a fishfinder and radar in two multi-function screens with the engine gauges to the left and the blueArrow controls and throttle to the right. The VHF radio communications is centrally mounted so either the skipper or a crewmember can communicate.

Dropping down into each hull there are functional bunks designed to take standard domestic mattresses for cuddly and snugly, but for the boys it's keep to your own sleeping bags please.

The interior is lined with Fronrunner fabric throughout and boat carpet on the saloon and accommodation decks.

It is interesting to note that hot water onboard is provided by a califont situated outside sheltered under the eaves.

Tankage consists of 600 litres of fresh water with a 400 litre black water tank. The marine head is flushed with salt water and discharges into the black water tank. There is 2800 litres of fuel



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The main saloon



BBQ station



Outdoor dining




Davit extends out when in use

to feed the Volvo Pentas below in two 2 x 1400 litre fuel tanks.

The interior décor is quite shaded and dark, which is pleasing and easy on the eyes. It's also easy to clean and makes a comfortable environment for the crew and passengers.

During her sea trials we were impressed with the performance of *BlackJack II*, especially given her size and the horsepower onboard. Cruising at 22 knots we were burning 100 litres an hour over both engines. Increasing to 30 knots service speed, fuel consumption rose to 155 litres per hour on both engines for a range of 560nm. At 41 knots with the taps open this baby was sucking 250 litres per hour over both engines. Clearly, at 40 knots one was starting to cover some ground very quickly. While fishing in Cook Strait this would be comforting when a dirty southerly showed up and one needed to get home in a hurry to beat the weather; *BlackJack II* is capable of doubling her speed by opening the chequebook.

While the vessel has been built primarily for the serious recreational fisher who wants to cruise the Marlborough Sounds, fish the Strait and dive the Kapiti coast, this hull design is capable of not only being an excellent workboat-charter boat for fishing and general use, she also offers opportunities for extending the cabin aft and turning her into a water taxi or small ferry with low-wash capabilities while still giving an excellent turn of speed. 

SPECIFICATIONS

Length	16m
Beam	5m
Draft	650mm at rest 350mm underway
Deadweight	15 tonnes
Engines	2 x D11 670hp Volvo Penta marine diesels
Propulsion	2 x HJ 364 HamiltonJet blueArrow waterjets
Top speed	41 knots
Service speed	30 knots
Builder and designer	Senator Boats



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