

LOCAL REVIEW

Surtees 650 Game Fisher

SPORTY SURTEES

Surtees are so popular, it was only because a demo boat became available that Kevin Smith was able to get his hands on one.

WORDS AND PICS **Kevin Smith**





It's been a long time between Surtees drinks for me — around three years to be precise. Regardless, I regularly see the New Zealand imports on the water, as they are certainly a plate boat that's easily identifiable with their hardcore and sharp looking military styled lines.

Throughout the years of testing the brand, it's a no-brainer that the boats need no introduction to the Aussie market and it's evident our Kiwi brothers from across the ditch do a great job at building some of the toughest plate boats around to handle some of the toughest ocean conditions. What I have noticed over the past few years is how its range has grown, with boats starting from 4.95m through to 8.6m, and in a number of variations or configurations to suit.

Northside Marine is one of the local Brisbane dealers which finds that as fast as the Surtees come in, they go straight out the door to happy

Surtees customers — another reason why we don't get our hands on them to test. Northside Marine recently put one of its own dedicated demo Surtees 650 Game Fishers together and we managed to tee up a full day's test out to the *Tangalooma* wrecks off Moreton Island, along with chasing after a few of the elusive spotted mackerel — or anything that would oblige to eating one of our lures, for that matter.

Upon arriving at the launch site, the 650 Game Fisher was loaded up and ready to go on the pontoon and, at a quick glance, the metallic candy-apple red paintwork caught my eye. It's definitely not my colour of choice, however it most certainly steps the boat up to something a bit classier, as well as a show-piece type of look.

At the next glance, the outriggers, rocket launchers loaded with game rods, big open Seadek padded decks and trims, plus multitude

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The candy-apple red colour is certainly a standout; There's more than enough space for your crew's rods; Seadek has padded the deck and trim for a clean finish



of other options loaded into the boat add another classy dimension to new 650. First impressions are that as per usual, this is another Surtees destined for offshore serious business, but with a refined touch of class added to it.

Before running through what the 650 Game Fisher has to offer, testing boats for Northside Marine does come at a price — and that's spending an entire day on the water in whatever conditions are thrown at you. We are also forced to fish for the day which is tough; however, we seem to always have the same problem — the fish don't like a camera lens. It's either that, or more

likely the legend Bill Hull from Northside Marine having some type of bad juju going on. Seriously, we are good fisherman, but man, the fish don't play ball on our tests.

OPTIONED UP

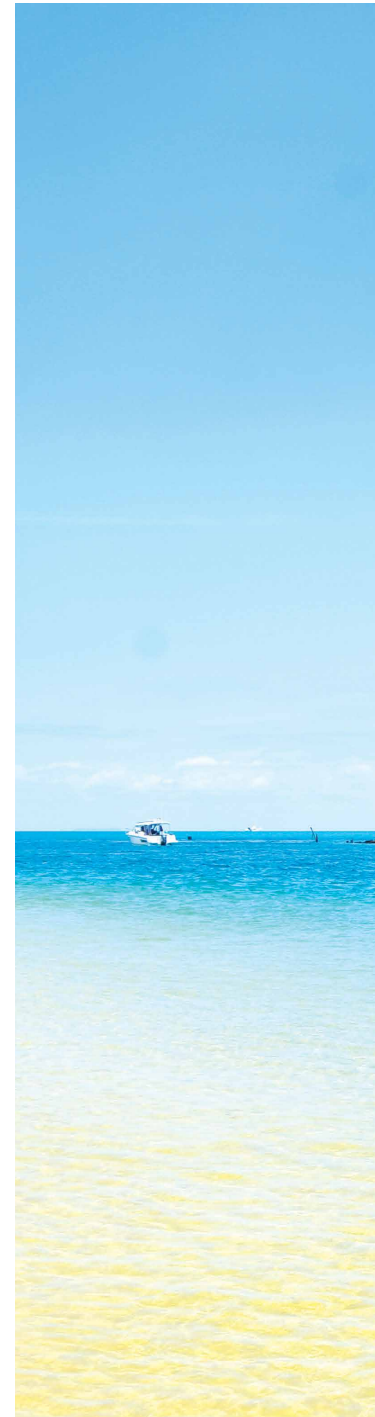
On to the business end of the test. Surtees come with a number of decent standard options within their layouts, enough to get you out there fishing without breaking the bank. As a demo boat for Northside Marine, somebody had a twitchy finger on this one and ticked a number of the options available — like 50 grand's worth.



So, what's this tricked-up Surtees weapon got to offer? Well, boarding can be done via the rear fold-down ladder and slide-out transom door on top of the live-well. You then enter a wide, open, and uncluttered fishing utopia. The grey, full Seadek padded dancefloor and gunwales look the part and with so much open fishing space, a serious All Black haka could be done on this fishing deck. However, if memory serves me correct, their haka didn't work too well for them in the last rugby world cup...

Moving on, I like the extra-wide coamings, monster side pockets, clip-on rod holders, upgraded bait board setup, optional side clip-on the seats, plenty of rod/sinker/drink holders, new transom layout with lower batteries and easy access to plumbing and transom door slide with mid-height live-well.

It's a clean and neat deck layout, however there's no flush-mount kill-tank and in this case it's an acceptable compromise as Surtees has upgraded the hull's 250L fuel tank capacity, along with its Anti-Roll stability ballast built into the keel chewing up this space. It's a minor price to pay as there's more than enough space onboard for large eskies, chilly bins, cooler boxes, thongs, slops and jandals for all cuzzies and mates.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Heading out with all lines prepared; The latest tech will get you where you want to go and then easily keep you there; It's a sleek-looking boat that's sure to turn heads



Up front you have a well thought out cab setup featuring a hard-top with the optional canvas shade extension, eight rocket launchers, captain's air vent hatch, plenty of grab rails, nice high tinted split screens pre-drilled for wipers, and plush lining throughout. It's an interesting design as Surtees has kept it fairly compact to maintain the cockpit deck space, however the seating is not fully protected on the sides by the cab — again, a minor compromise that can be easily sorted with an additional angled screen attachment. Surtees has numerous seating options available and here it has optioned up with the custom tackle seat box on the port side and large esky below the

captain's upgraded carbon seat model. It's a good setup with plenty of walk-through space between.

The new upgraded dash and helm station is another good setup, housing large flush-mount electronics like the Garmin GPSMap 8416XSV, as well as numerous switch panels and the like. I do like the sharper angle to the dash and steering, as well as the offset binnacle, with the Yamaha Helm Master EX joystick control shelf nicely positioned to suit comfortable driving and operating — yes, this boat has Yammy's new single motor joystick control system which adds just short of \$20K to this boat. Regardless, it's awesome to have if you can afford the extra coin.



Sea Trials

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Wind: 0-16 knots NE

Sea: Calm to 0.7m wind over tide, bay chop

RPM	KNOTS	L/H	RANGE (NM)
1000	4.58	3.5	868
1500	5.93	5.2	757
2000	8.09	9	597
2500	9.71	13.5	477
3000	14	16	581
3500	21.6	22	652
4000	24.3	29	556
4500	28	35	531
5000	33	49	447
5500	36.1	68	352
5800	38.3	73	348





TOP TO BOTTOM
It handled chop and glassy conditions equally as well; There wasn't much biting on review day (once again)

The cab is open plan with a simple zipped canvas to close it off, along with a large vent hatch to access the anchor well. The cab has decent sized side pockets, is plush lined, has decent under-seat storage and is surprisingly spacious and comfortable for the odd overnighter or midday nap when you are fished out.

INNOVATIVE DESIGN

Surtees boats are renowned and rated to be one of the more comfortable riding plate boats on the market, and this stems from the company's intricate hull design.

To start, the Razortech hull has a fine entry on the bow with variable deadrise tapering back to 20 degrees on the transom. Finer entries and bigger deadrise will always create a soft ride through chop, however there is always going to be that compromise to stability and spray coming off the hull.

To combat the stability issue, Surtees has the Anti-Roll system built into its boats — it's a full-length keel ballast that floods at rest and empties fast as you accelerate. The 650 Game Fisher sucks in around 300L of ballast, and the bigger boats up to 530L.





The boats also have the Anti-Roll Lock built in, and that's a shut-off gate on the transom, enabling you to lock in the water in for an even softer ride, although your economy would suffer. The shut-off gate can also be closed keep the water out, suiting beach launching and shallow water use.

CHOP ANNIHILATOR

The day started with heading out through Cabbage Tree Creek, and the new integrated Yamaha Helm Master EX came into action straight up. Integrated into the Garmin GPSMap 8416XSV, the new Helm Master EX does some pretty amazing stuff, like seamlessly auto navigating us out of the creek — impressive to say the least.

Once out of the creek, the 33km run to the wrecks was done in glassed-out conditions and at smooth and comfortable speed of 28–30kt, and the Yamaha 175hp four-stroke had us there

in around 38 minutes. Once the filming was done, we headed out into the main Moreton Bay channels to chase those elusive spotties and by this time the tide was running out at full steam, along with a nice northeasterly puffing against it at 12kt.

Wind over tide in Moreton Bay creates one of the worst chops around and throughout the day we comfortably sat at an average family driving pace of 20–23kt in all directions to the chop. If it were mates onboard it would change significantly, with 27–30kt being the order of the day.

I found the 650 reacts well to speed in the chop and you can belt around at 30kt in the rough quite easily, however you will need to hold on a bit tighter. Having the optional trim-tabs fitted you can really fine tune the 650's ride to suit the prevailing conditions, and definitely worth the extra spend.

Rated from 150–200hp, the Yamaha 175 is a nicely balanced match to the hull. However,



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The optional clip-on side seat offers respite between bites; Under-seat storage space up front for everything you'd need; More tackle is accessible in this nifty hideaway; Though it's a day boat, there's room for a nap

Facts & Figures

SURTEES 650 GAME FISHER

PRICED AS TESTED

\$142,456.

OPTIONS FITTED

Yamaha F175XCA, Yamaha Helm Master, Garmin GPSMap 8416XSV with GT54 Transducer, dual battery system, SeaDek flooring / gunwales, Ocean Blue Outriggers 15in carbon poles, candy-apple red metallic paint

PRICED FROM

\$85,451 including Yamaha F150XB, Redco Surtees 650 aluminium trailer

GENERAL

TYPE Offshore allrounder

MATERIAL Aluminium

LENGTH 6.5m

BEAM 2.375m

WEIGHT 1690kg

DEADRISE 20 degrees

CAPACITIES

PEOPLE 6

BERTHS 1

REC. HP 150hp

MAX. HP 200hp

FUEL 250L

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL Yamaha F175XCA.

TYPE 16-valve In-line 4 DOHC

WEIGHT 220kg

DISPLACEMENT 2785cc

GEAR RATIO 1.86:1

PROPELLER Yamaha Reliance 14.5x15

MANUFACTURED BY

Surtees Boats New Zealand

SUPPLIED BY

Northside Marine
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4034 QLD

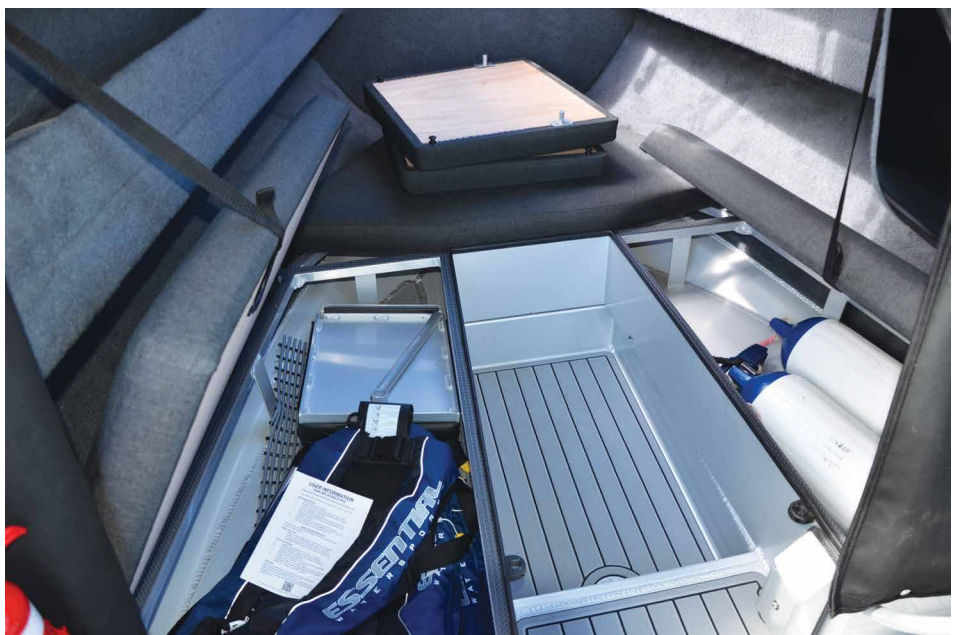
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“Underway, the stability is not bad at all, again considering the 20-degree deadrise.”



I reckon a 150hp would easily suffice, with the 200hp suiting those who want the maximum grunt all-round. The 175's hole-shot was perky, with mid-range acceleration being nice and responsive. Average economy wasn't too bad considering the deep-v hull and 20 degree deadrise.

One thing I did notice when quartering the slop was a fair bit of spray hitting the screens. Again, that comes back to the finer entry on the bow and reverse chine not being too aggressive. It's another small compromise that's easily overcome with adding a wiper if it really bothered you.

Underway the stability was not bad at all, again considering the 20-degree deadrise. The hull is smooth and responsive in tight turns and overall it's an easy and comfortable boat to drive. At rest it's a totally different story and you do notice just how

well the stability ballast works — an area where they do have the upper hand over glass boats.

At rest while fishing, the Yamaha Helm Master EX came into play again and although I did a feature on it when first released, you can never get your head around all the features and just how well they can work on a quick hour and a half test.

Since then, I've seen one in action on a 33ft centre console, though the owner did not take the time to learn how to use it properly — if you are going to splash out on a system like this, at least put a bit of effort into learning how to use it.

On the 650 Game Fisher it was a totally different story and Uncle Bill from Northside Marine was all over the functions of the Helm Master EX like a kid on a PlayStation.

We hopped from beacon to beacon in search of the spotties and every stop involved a tap on the Fish-Point button, which GPS locks you on the spot without having to manually operate the motor or drop an anchor. In light current or wind, the Helm Master's Fish-Point function is a game changer, accurately holding the transom on the spot with light and quiet gear shifts. There is a bow-up function, however there's more manoeuvring involved on the single motor and I find wind and current affects the accuracy, so it's not a function I would use on a regular basis.

In 4-5kt of tide combined with wind, the standard default torque setting of two for Fish-Point isn't enough to hold you on the spot, but a few simple taps on the joystick changes the torque setting to suit. Now obviously the motor livens up if you have set on high torque, but it did a bloody good job at holding the Surtees within 2-5m of the spot. This is a definitely a function I would constantly use and, if conditions were too harsh on transom back-ups, you then have a plethora of other options available to suit. The Drift-Point function allows the bow to be pointed in a set direction whilst naturally drifting, or you can use the Drift-Point Track function which does the same, but on a set track of waypoints so you don't miss the hot spots on the reef. Again, these functions can all be set at the suitable torque to suit conditions.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The Surtees has space for six; Rod holders galore; It's got all the features you need for fishing but can also be tricked up as a dive or family boat; The Helm Master EX seamlessly auto navigated us out of the creek



“Tricked up with all the bells and whistles this Surtees 650 Game Fisher will set you back \$142,456”



Aside from game-changer fishing functions, the Helm Master Ex has a plethora of other functions built into the system. Sporting autopilot and digital electric steering, you can sit back and relax whilst the quiet and smooth Helm Master does its magic. You can even set the autopilot speed to be maintained and even deaccelerate on arrival. Pre-selected Set-Point Mode of choice can also be entered to land you smack on your desired spot. I also like the heading hold and course hold functions, as it eliminates the need to set autopilot routes. In areas I know well, like the bay, it was a simple tap on heading hold to keep me on a direct course to my destination.

Am I sold on the system? I am, and particularly for the bigger boats heading offshore. The single motor Helm Master Ex works exceptionally well, but for twins, trips, and quads it's even better. Cost-wise, it most certainly tops up the final spend, however you would be in for a \$10K spend on a big electric motor and battery setup anyway, and that doesn't include half of these functions.



THE WRAP

Tricked up with all the bells and whistles this Surtees 650 Game Fisher will set you back \$142,456, and for what you are getting I don't think it's a bad price at all.

The starting price of \$85,451 including a Yamaha F150XB and Redco Surtees 650 aluminium trailer also appeals. Add another \$5K or so with a few options to suit and you will be on the water for less than \$100K.

The Surtees 650 Game Fisher is no doubt dedicated to the avid offshore fisherman chasing a boat that can handle rough seas and long-distance runs. However Surtees has fantastic options available to transform its boats into dedicated dive and family boats, too.

Neat and clean finishes throughout, a decent performer all-round, and at 6.5m and around the 2t mark loaded up, they are an easy-to-tow and easy-to-operate option. [3v](#)





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The Yamaha 175 is a nicely balanced match to the hull; If you can't land a fish with this setup it's not the boat's fault; Helm Master's Fish-Point function is a game changer



About the author



KEVIN SMITH

Kevin Smith grew up fishing and boating on the waterways of Zimbabwe, fighting off crocodiles, hippos and lions in his spare time, before venturing to South Africa. Much to his parents' disgust, after graduating Kevin started work as a diving instructor and commercial coxswain.

Sometime during the 19 years he spent doing this, Kevin also started working as a journo, testing offshore trailer boats and writing fishing articles.

Thanks to his father being an Aussie, 2008 saw a permanent move to Australia, where

Kevin spent more of his time fishing and camping with his family.

The oldest of Kevin's kids shares his boating and fishing addiction, the middle is only interested in diving, or if fishing is guaranteed, the youngest would rather spend his time playing Fortnite, and his gem of a wife puts up with the lot of them.

Kevin has been a contributor with *Trade-a-Boat* since around 2011, testing a variety of boats. He hopes to continue this into the future, while also island-hopping and running fishing and eco charters.