

SURTEES

650

GAME FISHER



It's been close to a decade since a Surtees boat has featured in these pages. It was regular contributor Steve Hunt's 6m hard top that we first tested all those years ago, and ten years on we've been given the opportunity to go for a ride in its replacement – a brand new 650 Game Fisher. As many regular readers will be aware, Steve did a lot of blue water work in his first Surtees. It featured in many magazine articles and fished right around the State before eventually being moved on recently to

make way for a slightly bigger updated model. "Black Ops" is the new boat, and I must say it's a striking piece of equipment, particularly with its top shelf electronics package and new Yamaha 200 with the Helm Master option.

Like many boat buyers in the current market, Steve had to wait more than a year for the 650 Game Fisher to be delivered. It's been a frustrating time to say the least, with COVID completely changing the market in all sorts of leisure areas, but they say good things

come to those who wait, and it's hard to argue that this boat isn't the ultimate good thing!

For those unfamiliar with the Surtees brand, they come from New Zealand and are distributed here in SA by South Coast Marine at Goolwa. Built from plate aluminium and featuring the brilliant Anti-Roll stability ballast system, Surtees boats are designed to fish well offshore in a variety of conditions. The sub-deck ballast chamber floods with water when the hull comes to rest, adding extra

weight and lowering the boat's centre of gravity. As soon as power is applied and the hull climbs onto the plane, the ballast water is jettisoned in the blink of an eye; it's incredibly simple, yet at the same time incredibly effective.

Surtees offers the 650 hull in three configurations – Workmate, Pro Fisher and Game Fisher. The Game Fisher option comes with hard top and large capacity fuel tank for extended offshore work, which is exactly what Steve Hunt was looking for. He does a lot of blue

water tuna chasing, often covering 100km or more in a day's fishing, and as well as a big fuel tank, he is regularly in need of the protection afforded by a decent hard top.

The 650 Game Fisher is constructed from heavy plate alloy, welded with precision in the Whakatane factory. As you'd expect in a boat of this style, it's loaded with user-friendly and fishing-specific features, even in its basic form. A very useful inclusion is the Anti Roll Lock Shut off gate, which is located at

the aft end of the ballast tank and serves dual purposes. It enables the operator to flood the ballast tank, then trap that water to increase the boat's weight, which markedly improves handling in a rough sea. At the opposite end of the spectrum, closing the gate in shallow water with the ballast tank empty will reduce overall weight and facilitate launching or retrieving when water depth is an issue.

The standard features inventory with this model is indeed impressive.

A toughened glass, tinted windscreen provides security in a big head sea, you'll find multiple alloy rod holders, hydraulic steering, plenty of well-positioned grab rails, offshore transom with boarding platform and collapsible ladder, boarding gate, live bait tank and substantial aft bait station – all of which combine to form a very useful and effective blue water fishing package. The optional extras list is just as comprehensive, offering a heap of goodies to choose from if the budget permits.

I've been watching Yamaha's new Helm Master system throughout its development, and was excited to see how it all works when I climbed aboard Steve's boat. This is one of the most innovative new engine accessories to hit the market for many years, and one that will probably change the trailer boat scene forever. In very basic terms, Helm Master can be used to hold a boat in position over a reef or school of fish without the need to anchor. It does

a lot more than this, of course, but I can see this feature as being the most significant. Many boaties have been using bow-mounted electric outboards in 'spot lock' mode to achieve this, but Yamaha now provides the same function in the main engine. From the

short time I got to play around with Helm Master during our Surtees test run, it looks to be a real winner.

Test conditions for our early February run out of North Haven weren't exactly ideal for a big, bold offshore rig. However, I know exactly what the

Surtees hull can do in lumpy conditions. The deep vee hull with extremely fine entry carves its way into a decent head sea with ease, reducing the banging that often comes with flatter hulls. Without the ballast chamber to compensate, such a radical vee would result in poor stability at rest, and it's a combination that makes Surtees one of the softest riding plate boats on the market.

Steve's boat is very quick off the mark; in fact, it's lightning fast getting onto the plane with the big Yammie on the back. Top speed over relatively

calm water was a tad over 40 knots, and the Game Fisher cruised effortlessly at 4000rpm and 28 knots. Fuel burn at cruise was a thoroughly impressive 1.6 litres per litre (or around a litre per nautical mile), which is what you're looking for when you're heading wide and need to keep an eye on fuel usage.

At rest the Surtees is exactly what its designers claim – rock solid underfoot. As soon as the ballast tank is full (almost instantaneously when the hull comes to rest), you can feel the weight below deck level and notice how that weight

increases general stability. I know I've mentioned it already, but it really is clever and sets Surtees apart from most of its close competition.

Steve Hunt has really gone to the top shelf for his new boat's accessories and electronics. Mega screen Garmin GPS/sounder/radar/autopilot unit, Helm Master system and electric anchor winch are certain to make this rig a winner for Steve as he continues his quest for big fish around the State. It's hard to come up with another big plate boat that offers so much in a single package.



The new Yamaha F200A is a brilliant engine



At full noise off Outer Harbor



Big screen Garmin, throttle and Helm Master set up



Dual sub-seat ice boxes are a handy inclusion



HOW MUCH?

Standard package with Yamaha F200 – \$122,850

GENERAL INFO'

Length overall – 6.50m
 Beam – 2.375m
 Hull weight – 1500kg
 Aluminium gauge – 5mm hull and transom, 4mm topsides

CAPACITIES

Fuel – 250 litres
 Ballast tank – 300 litres
 HP – 150-200

SUPPLIED BY

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