

Seaforce 430 Winna

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Since its June debut at the Auckland Boat Show, where it collected the award for the Best All-Purpose Boat under Six Metres, seven Seaforce 430 Winnas have been sold - three at the show itself. The rapid sales underscore the wide appeal of a stylish, easy-to-handle runabout. Lawrence Schaffler reports.

The Winna's design brief, says its Hamilton-based builder, Seaforce Marine, was shaped around the first time buyer, or perhaps a retiree wanting to downsize to a smaller boat. And, as affordability was a major consideration, the boat had to be able to perform with lower horse-powered outboards.

There's little doubt the designers have more than achieved their objective. First up, the Winna is light, stable and easy to handle, and a 40hp Mercury provides a very nippy performance. It's undeniably utilitarian - but without being spartan. The boat looks sleek and sporty, and has plenty of good design features to elevate it well above the "just another runabout" status. It's a small boat with lots of style and character.

With a hull weight of 250kg, the Winna is easily guided off and on to its trailer. The 40hp motor is at the top end of the recommended horse power rating. "It planes easily with a 20 or 30 horse power motor," says Mike Boyce, Silverdale dealer (Mike's Marine) for the SeaForce boats. "The 40 provides a bit more flexibility - skiing, for example, or putting additional gear or an extra person in the boat." A 30hp motor, he says, propels the boat at around 22 knots. A 40hp extends that to 28 knots.

Whatever the horsepower, the boat rides quietly and easily, and during our test of rapid, tight turns, it tracked perfectly. Conditions were mild, which forced us to tackle a series of wake jumps. The boat remained perfectly dry. All of which points to a successful hull design, with its distinctive reverse chines and gull-wing sections dispersing spray efficiently. These features also contribute to the boat's excellent stability while at rest.



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Pragmatic

Despite its 4.3m length, the Winna has a surprisingly roomy cockpit, and there's plenty of evidence of pragmatic design. The fuel-tank, for example, is positioned on the opposite side of the helm station to help maintain balance. Reaching over the windshield to handle the anchor rope would be uncomfortable - so the designers have introduced a split-screen door. Opening it provides easy access to the anchor rope and bollard.



A non-skid cockpit floor makes for easy hosing off and cleaning. The two pedestal, swivel seats are a classy touch, and the watertight pods on which they're mounted are even better. Removing the large, rubber-sealed hatches reveals plenty of space for stowing cameras, spare clothing, food - whatever.

More storage is provided by a generous shelf below the windscreen (under the dash). The dash also contains a glove box, handy for keys, wallets, sunscreen and the first-aid kit.

In the cockpit are upholstered side pockets fitted with rod clamps, one of which holds the telescopic anchor pole light. In the rear section of the cockpit are two upholstered removable bin seats.

Being CPC compliant, the Winna has full navigational lights, a bilge pump, a battery-isolating switch, and a strap to secure the fuel-tank. The anchor light - on its telescopic pole - has brass contacts built into the base of the pole. It's simply inserted into the socket mounted on the transom, and is quickly extended to provide 360-degree visibility (well above the Bimini).

Four rod holders and two drink holders are located within easy reach behind the swivel seats. An expansive Bermuda bait tray slots into any of the rod holders.

Durability

Seaforce boats are sold with a five-year warranty on the hull, an offer made possible by the use of the Lloyds-approved isophthalic resin (resistant to cleaning chemicals and petrol) in the fibreglass construction. This material has a longer life span than conventional fibreglass resins, and there is less chance of cracking as the boat ages. A heavy-duty rub rail protects the hull from jetties and wharves.

The Winna offers a reassuring safety feature. Its design allows for 80 per cent of the buoyancy foam to be distributed above the floor. As a result, in the event of the boat being swamped, the boat remains floating in an upright position (as demonstrated by the marine surveyor carrying out the inspection for the CPC compliance certificate).

Adding instrumentation to the boat should be easy. A centre recess below the dash is ideal for mounting a fishfinder, and below that, a VHF radio. A 12-volt accessory socket (spotlight fitting) is factory mounted (on the left of the steering wheel), and on the opposite side, a four-way BEP Marine switch panel. The dash has room for four gauges.

Mike's Marine is offering the Winna as a complete package for \$21,495 inc GST. Included is the 40hp Mercury motor (electric start, trim and tilt), canopy side curtains, an anchor, warp and chain, the Bermuda bait board and a Navman 4100 Fishfinder. The Dunbier trailer is fitted with submersible lights, a winch and strap, tie-downs and a jockey wheel.

And that makes it a hard-to-beat entry-level boat. The overall weight of the rig (550kg) should be easily towed by most small-to-medium cars. Hassle-free launching and retrieval will also endear it to many - particularly those who like to sneak out early on a crisp morning for a spot of fishing - alone.