

Boat Report

Hysucat

STEALTH 6.5

This RIB has twin hulls, lift-generating hydrofoils, skewed outboards and a customised cockpit. Does it work?

Even at a first casual glance this South African craft is unusual, being a rigid inflatable catamaran. In fact the innovation goes far further than that, as the Hysucat Stealth 6.5 features a fixed hydrofoil system.

We tried two versions, both powered by twin 50hp outboards, to check out the builders' claims for improved driveability, performance and economy.

Design & layout

The main hydrofoil bridges the space between the two hulls amidships, and is augmented by a pair of trim foils at the transom. As momentum gathers they generate lift, reduce the wetted surface area of the hulls and thereby increase planing efficiency.

The idea is that less power is required for a given level of performance, and this results in improved fuel economy. The foil is also intended to have a damping effect on the boat's reaction to waves, making the ride smoother.

Another eye-catching feature is the way the twin outboards are mounted on the transom, set just inside the tubes and angled so that the cowls are in and the props are out. It all looks a bit busy back there, but apparently this is a common policy in South Africa and aids handling on tight turns, reducing the tendency of the inside hull to lift.

The layout can be arranged to a buyer's specification. Two T-shaped channels run from just aft of the bow to the stern, and a choice of interior modules clamp onto these.

The whole cockpit is very spacious, with excellent stowage. Build quality is fine, and the installation of engines, instrumentation and wiring is competent.

In terms of styling, there is no mistaking that this is a RIB, but with their colour combinations and interior fit-out the builders have gone for a leisure rather than



a workboat look. The stainless steel metalwork, though, adds to its functional appeal.

Performance & handling

You can run the Stealth 6.5 with a single-engine rig, but both our test boats came with twin 50hp outboards on the transom, from Honda in one case and Mercury in the other.

As far as the boat's ride is concerned, the first impression is of driving in slow motion. The noise and spray are all real-time but the movement is delayed and subdued. This, of course, is just the effect the builders were after.

The ride is far more comfortable than a conventional hull, and notably dry. The hydrofoil does have a damping effect as intended, and vertical motion is extremely placid. We did get the boat out of the water on the odd occasion, but a more conventional craft would have been airborne far more often in the healthy Solent chop we found.

The strange thing is that all this creates a sensation of drag. You feel the speed is not what it could be for the work the engines are putting in. You get onto the plane very quickly, but then that slow-motion feeling licks in, and the boat does not feel as quick as the stopwatch shows.

You also have to drive the boat less, with little working of the throttles required. You soon gain confidence in the hull's ability, although you have to get used to it turning all but flat.

Our radar gun recorded top speeds of 29 knots with the Hondas and 31 knots with the Mercurys. The Mercs also won the honours on acceleration, taking 2.5sec from standstill to 15 knots and 5.8sec to 25 knots, against the Hondas' figures of 3.1sec and 6.9sec respectively. We would put the Mercs' advantage down to the extra length of their legs; on

Aft layout

The full-width aft bench will seat three in comfort, with plenty of legroom, which should mean that passengers have no need to ride the tubes. If they do, though, there are safety lines on the tube tops to serve as handholds.

A stainless steel frame extending alongside and above the seat provides handholds, aesthetic appeal and a conveniently high mounting point for a ski-rope, keeping the line out of the water and giving a better pull. Aft is the tidy moulded engine well.

There is a large and easily



accessible locker under the bench, where the twin batteries are fitted, in addition to the good-sized locker in the base of the helm seat.

The cockpit drains through two scuppers to twin flappers in the transom.

Helm

The two-seat helm bench offers a driving position on the left, but with centre-mounted throttles so you do not have to relearn your co-ordination.

The console itself and its small screen offer some protection from the elements, but the seating position is set fairly high above the tubes and you feel quite exposed. This is enhanced by the lack of side support; with its hinged back, to allow you to sit facing aft for sociability when at rest, it is obviously something of a compromise.

The dashboard is fairly basic, but there is plenty of room to mount the



outboard engine instrumentation packages, with some space left over for a VHF and any electronics required.

The walkways on both sides of the console are quite narrow, but the handrails at the front lend some support for anyone moving forward.

subsequent trials, the distributors claim they have achieved around 35 knots with the same engines fitted with higher-pitched props.

With our fuel-flow meter refusing to function, sadly we were unable to verify the claim of improved fuel efficiency.

Conclusions

Does the Stealth 6.5's innovative hull design work? Well, our test boats' top speeds were not dramatic, but the ride is undoubtedly more comfortable than on comparable craft, even if it leaves you feeling a little

detached from what is going on.

The advantages of the catamaran hull configuration go beyond this, though, providing the platform for a generous cockpit fit-out, addressing the common RIB deficiencies of a narrow internal beam and a lack of stowage.

Their novelty could make the Hysucat range hard to sell in the UK, but for those who look for something different and are prepared to embrace new design ideas there is plenty on offer. It would appear there is a slight premium to pay for this, but there is little left wanting in terms of specification. □

Forward layout

Right forward, there is a moulded bow locker ahead of an aft-facing seat. Two grabrails are provided, which will be handy when boarding if the craft is beached or for steadying yourself while seated.

There is a further forward-facing single seat in front of the helm position. Again this has grabrails on

both sides, extending over the top of the small console.

The seat hinges forward to give access to two 5gal fuel tanks as standard. Two more could be located in the remaining space, or a fixed tank can be specified as an option.

A bow post aids mooring and a bow roller facilitates anchoring, though the one on our test boat was to be changed as it was felt it was too vulnerable.



BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic hull with Hypalon tubes

DIMENSIONS

LOA

21ft 3in (6.5m)

BEAM

7ft 9in (2.4m)

INTERNAL BEAM

4ft 6in (1.4m)

TUBE DIAMETER

1ft 6in (0.5m)

DRAUGHT

0ft 8in (0.27m)

DISPLACEMENT

771lb (350kg)

ENGINES

twin 50hp Honda or Mercury 4-stroke petrol outboards

PRICE

from £5700 ex VAT excluding engines; £17,000 as tested

SUPPLIERS

Crayford Marine, Lyon Way, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 0LQ. Tel: 01727 851222.

BUILDERS

Hysucat Marine (Pty), Unit 17, Alternator Park, Alternator Avenue, Montague Gardens, 67441 South Africa. Tel: (27) 21 55 27 61.