

Top of the Class

Wayne Kampe reports on one very versatile rig from one of Australia's best known tinny manufacturers.

THIS big side console – the flagship of the Top Ender range – is but one of Quintrex's "Instant Boating" turn-key boat/motor/trailer packages. The reviewed craft was supplied ex-factory from the Gold Coast Marine Precinct. Powered by a Mercury 115hp Saltwater Series two-stroke, the sleek Quinnie slipped willingly off her trailer and with the Merc firing at first turn of the key, Cliff from Quintrex idled her over to a berth. As I loaded the gear it's hard to say just what impressed me most, the amount of room or the stability. Virtually all the interior equates to useful fishing room. But then that great stability is hard to overlook as well; purposely organising three people on one side of the rig didn't phase it one bit.

Quintrex has obviously put a fair bit of thought into the Top Ender series and the 580's appointments and overall usefulness

reflect this. The bow rail, for instance, doesn't need to be overly high on such a craft and thankfully, it's not. Yet the split in the rail means access to or from the bow is easy. Similarly, the anchor well is easily accessed and deep, with a wide area of non-skid deck along side. The forward carpeted casting deck will fish a couple of anglers easily and comes with three ally-core non-warping hatches leading to compartments below. Central is the 72-litre bait tank which means no going aft to the transom bait well every time a livey is required. Port and starboard side under deck storage areas are also useful, given that they are made of easily cleaned acrylic and will double for gear storage, or even fish.

There's a seat spigot in the forward deck which is handy for those times when fish or obstruction spotting is paramount. Family boaters will love this feature as well, giving one lucky member a great ride up front.



The Top Ender's centre console was just the right size and instruments are well set out and easily read. Note those big grab handles.



The Quintrex Top Ender's Maxi 2 transom provides a lot of lift and combined with flotation makes it suitable for four and two-stroke outboards.

Stepping down the 30-odd centimetres to the main deck, you immediately note the terrific transom and gunwale height. At around thigh height, the gunwales offer great peace of mind for family boaters with youngsters aboard, but for fishos working offshore (and this craft does have strong offshore credentials), the gunwale height combines with the full length cockpit off-floor toe rail to provide both brace points and leverage when hard at work on a big fish. The aluminium toe rail is also the base for the craft's in-built upright flotation system. The flotation material extends along each side and is totally concealed. Easily cleaned, moulded side panels are an innovative design feature of these boats, incorporating rod racks, cockpit lights, drink holders, mounting points for speakers, plus storage for loose items, tackle or clothing. The paired rod racks each side are a cut above many found in today's fishing boats. The soft rubber construction means that rod finishes won't suffer and the racks are long enough to be useful.

Wide gunwales are another handy aspect of the Top Ender's layout. Most anglers like to sit on a gunwale while fishing no matter how many seats are aboard and they can certainly do so in the big Top Ender. The gunwales are also set up with paired rod holders each side plus mounting points for the standard bimini which can be lowered and socked if not required. Personally, given the useful height of the bimini, I'd leave it exactly where it is to provide shade.

Quintrex has provided a great deal of flexibility in seating set up with no less than five spigots for seats, four aft, plus another forward. Three strongly built pedestal seats provide seating for the skipper and mate plus another person seated either just ahead of the console, to port, or up front.

The side console to starboard was well finished in the Quintrex tradition and was equipped with both centre shelving and portside flip-out drink holders. I warmed to the big grab rails built in around the sturdy console – in offshore conditions you can never have too many of these! The natty carbon finish instrument panel on the vertical surface of the console, just below the top, was equipped with an array of instruments to monitor the Mercury Saltwater 115, plus fuel and trim gauges. In pride of place atop the console was a Lowrance X 135 sounder, standard fitment within the 580, as is a marine radio tucked into the console.

The wide transom is set up with an off-floor shelf for battery, fuel filter, and the like and is carpeted, same as all floor areas within the craft. Rod holders and neat grab rails are set up in aft quarters with a



The 580 provides a roomy and very stable fishing platform. Chasing fish from one end of the rig to the other is easy.

usefully large bait station and moveable live well mounted centrally on top of the transom. Aft of the transom there's a boarding ladder to port plus a non-skid swim platform each side of the outboard mounted on the Quintrex Maxi 2 transom which provides both buoyancy and lift. A transom gate is an option.

Power to burn

The Quintrex 580 Top Ender's hull is virtually a show piece of current Quintrex design to date. There's the Millennium bow which, although offering a very fine entry to

oncoming chop or seas, also carries plenty of flare topsides to deflect spray admirably. Under water lines of the 5.98m long and 2.39m wide vee form hull consist of five chine pressings each side of the strong and well-formed keel with a small but useful reversed water line chine as well. The Maxi 2 transom, a full width pod, assures plenty of buoyancy aft plus lift and it came as no surprise at all to find that the hull planed at a eight knots at a mere 2500rpm from the Merc. The ability to maintain a low speed plane is not given to every craft of this size but is most certainly

going to be appreciated by anglers trolling offshore or cruising slowly in snag filled rivers.

Yet plenty of performance is there if required. Three thousand rpm saw 17 knots on the GPS, 4000 rpm 25 knots and 5000 rpm a brisk 34 knots. I saw an easy cruising speed of around 25 knots as optimum, providing ample



ABOVE: There is plenty of fishing room forward of the console and thanks to the flexible seating lay out anglers can make the most of it.



RIGHT: The transom bait station includes a cutting board and plumbed live well.



Flexible cockpit side paneling is a useful feature of the Top Ender as is the handy rod rack.

cruising range from the 120 litres of fuel under the floor with another bonus being that the 115 Mercury was just loafing along at those revs.

Quintrex offers a wide range of engines for the 580 Top Ender with up to 150hp permissible. The fitted Mercury 115 was minimum power although from where I sat in the driver's seat the engine certainly didn't fall short on performance. It had immediate response and shot the Quintrex onto the plane in just a couple of boat lengths in hard acceleration tests.

Top ride

We ran the Quinnie out from Coomera on the Gold Coast in search of fish. I was impressed with its ride and handling. Hydraulic steering made for quick wheel response and I found the rig to be very stable, straight tracking, and easy enough to handle that even a newcomer to boating would be confident in short order. On a windy day, a dry ride was a bonus with chop and serious wash from larger craft being a non-event thanks to the bow's ability to slice through them without fuss. It didn't take long before I formed the opinion that the hull could handle far more than the day dished out, even with crappy weather and around 15 to 20 knots of northerly blowing.

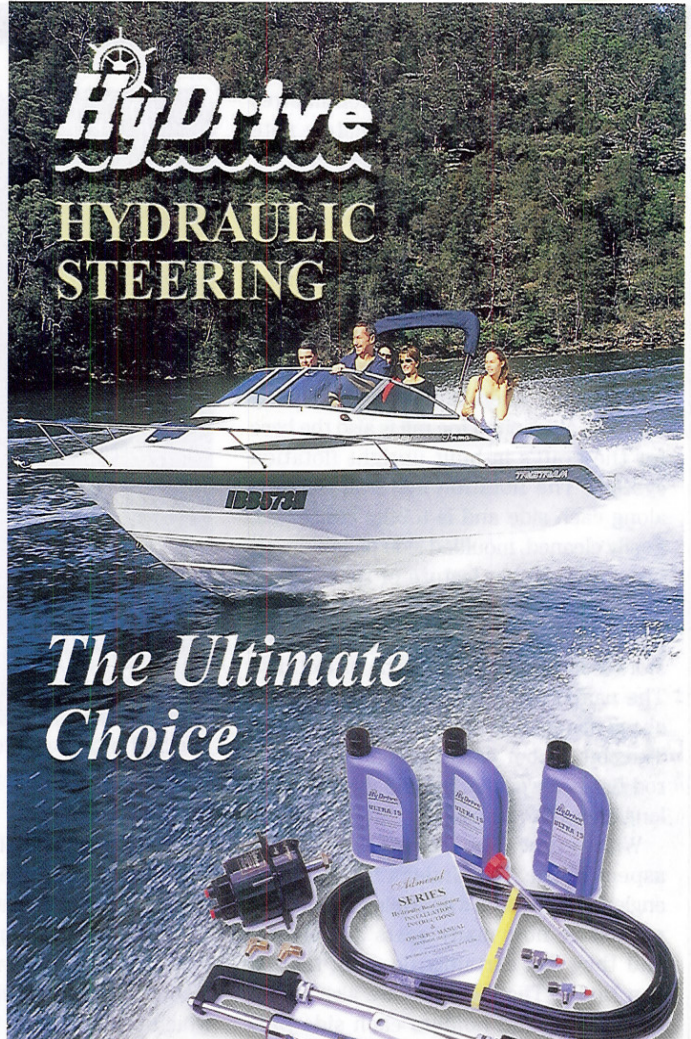
Finding shelter from the wind, we worked some lures for some time but it was tough going. A lot of fresh water was evident in the estuary system following recent heavy rain and the fishing was, to put it politely, lousy. Cliff was briefly hooked up but failed to boat the lively performer when the hook pulled. Maybe we would have been better off laying a string of pots for some mud crabs!

Which brings me to one of the strong points of this boat: its versatility. As I mentioned from the outset, while the 580 Top Ender is suited to offshore, estuary, or river work, the family boating/fishing enthusiast will easily stow pots or dillies aboard along with an ice box and head out for a crabbing session. ⚓

» Quintrex 580 Top Ender

- Length:** 5.8m, LOA 6.15M
- Beam:** 2.39m
- Weight:** Hull only 660kgs
- Hull depth:** 1.4m
- Hull thickness:** 4mm bottom, 3mm sides
- Fuel:** 120 litres
- Power:** As tested 115hp, maximum power 150hp

Contact: Test boat supplied by Quintrex was priced at \$37,294.
 For information on your nearest dealer contact (07) 55859898;
 Website at: www.quintrex.com.au



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