

BOAT TEST – NORTHBANK



Back in our December/January issue we tested the largest model in the Northbank range, the brilliant 650 Hard Top. This is a big boat with a price tag not everyone can afford. However, at the opposite end of the spectrum there's the Northbank 500 Cuddy, which is designed to suit the needs (and budgets) of the weekend angler or family boater. It's a superbly finished craft that's easy to tow and store, cheap to run and extremely versatile.

The Northbank story began in Port Adelaide in back in the 1990s. Jaan Lindsaar built the first models designed specifically for local conditions before eventually selling out to Rob Cuming, proprietor of Christies Beach Marine. Rob moved the whole shooting match down

south earlier this decade and his boats are now selling consistently, both here in SA and interstate. The Northbank brand is now well established along the eastern seaboard and, with a comprehensive new brochure just released, there's a good chance Rob Cuming will secure a lot more of the interstate market throughout 2010 and beyond. The Victorians, in particular, seem to love South Oz-built half cabs and cuddies, as they suit the conditions of Port Philip Bay and Westernport nicely.

The 500 Cuddy is neat little craft designed to carry two or three in comfort. It has been embraced by local anglers as the ideal boat for chasing our inshore fish such as whiting, gar and blue crabs. As a cuddy cab, it offers a good measure of cockpit space,

along with just enough under-cover area for keeping clothing and valuables away from the elements. You'll find handy storage space beneath the short berths up front, as well as further sub-deck storage and a pair of side pockets to accommodate gaffs and landing nets.

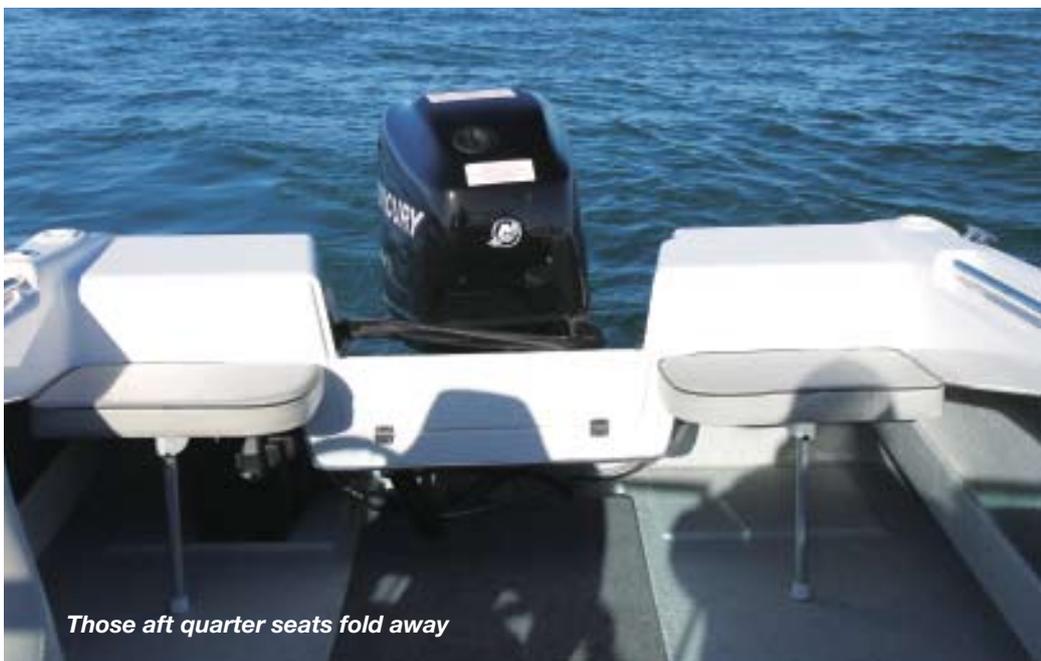
The standard of Northbank's fibreglass and gelcoat work is first class – certainly as good as anything you'll see from the big names in Queensland. The test boat was finished in white with distinctive navy trim and contrasting blue canopy. It wasn't fitted with a lot of 'bells and whistles', but was offered in base form to be optioned up if so desired. That's one of the nice things about having your boat built right here under your nose. You can add to or subtract from

K 500C

The 500 Cuddy at full noise of O'Sullivan Beach



The Northbank walk-through system is excellent



Those aft quarter seats fold away

the package as requirements and budget dictate and, of course, in the unlikely event of warranty issue, you know where the manufacturer lives!

Like all Northbank cuddies, the 500 comes with walk-through dash and windscreen. It's a system that works nicely and facilitates safe, secure anchoring. The walk-through corridor is wide enough for just about any user, with a hatch that opens sideways to starboard. The inclusion of a heavy duty bowsprit with a Teflon strip is a good idea, with the latter protecting against anchor chain damage. This bowsprit certainly looks tough enough to withstand the pressure when a snagged anchor is retrieved under power.

The list of standard features includes a

sports steering wheel, underfloor storage compartment, dash grab rail, custom upholstery, rear quarter seats and a 60 litre sub-deck fuel tank. The optional extras list is an extensive one, with bimini top, clip-in carpet, bunk in-fill, stainless rod rack and live bait tank of most interest to the fishing fraternity. 60 litres isn't an enormous fuel capacity by any stretch of the imagination, but it should provide ample range for most local fishing situations. If not, a couple of tote tanks or plastic jerry cans can be loaded aboard with consuming too much cockpit space.

Seating in this model is extremely comfortable. There's a pair of upholstered swivelling buckets up front and a couple of fold-away stools in the transom corners. Deck

hardware is all top quality stuff and you'll find sturdy grab rails wherever they should be. Being a walk-through, there's not a lot of room around the helm to mount electronics, so smaller compact GPS/sounder combos are definitely the way to go.

The test boat was powered by a 75hp Mercury four stroke, which packed plenty of punch. The hull is rated to carry up to a 90 horse two stroke, but the 75 seemed ample power for normal boating situations. The 500 hull weighs in at around 580kg, making the overall package a snack to tow behind the average family sedan. It would also be possible to beach launch with the aid of a four wheel drive tow vehicle.

Like the other Northbanks we have tested lately, the 500 Cuddy handles very nicely



She runs sweetly with the Merc 75

indeed. Even with the standard mechanical steering it was easy to throw from lock to lock and responded well to the most subtle trim adjustment. Conditions on our test day off O'Sullivan Beach were slight to moderate, with a 15 knot south-westerly kicking in just before noon. It was the sort of day the hull really enjoys and the hour we spent putting it through its paces was quite exhilarating.

Acceleration from rest was excellent with the Merc 75 and top speed over flat water was just over 30 knots. A 90 would turn this into a real flying machine, but it's really not necessary. A comfortable cruise speed of 24 knots was achieved at around 4600rpm and at an economical 3900 revs we could still manage 20 knots. The 'smell of an oily rag' theory would apply if you were

prepared to run at between 20-24 knots to the fishing grounds and back – something that's pretty important in these times of outrageous fuel prices.

There can be no doubting this is a neat little boat and an excellent local product. It suits the first-time boat owner perfectly. You'll find this and other Northbank models, on display and available for demo runs, at Christies Beach Marine.



A sports steering wheel is standard equipment



NORTHBANK

FIBREGLASS BOATS



GET ONBOARD

For over a decade the name Northbank has been synonymous for building offshore fishing vessels for local South Australian waters. Distinctive style, high quality production, generous freeboard and exhilarating dry riding performance make our range of 650 models the choice for offshore anglers. Get Onboard and support a local company producing a world class product.



650 Hard Top



650 Walkaround



650 Cuddy Cabin



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