

HAINES SIGNATURE

485SF



Once in a decade you come across a boat that really stands out in its class – a rig that just keeps on keeping on, showing no sign at all of becoming outdated or in need of a serious upgrade. Haines Signature's brilliant 485SF fits that category perfectly, and when Tim Hearse from Pacific Marine suggested we take one for a run recently, I couldn't climb aboard quickly enough. Although we've featured it in these pages before, I had no hesitation in revisiting this truly exceptional craft.

The 485SF has been around now for 13 years, consistently hanging onto a major slice of the high-end estuary fishing market. Originally modelled on the US bass boat concept, it's aimed squarely at serious sportfishers looking for a fast, stable boat that operates

nicely in shallow water, but also is capable of handling a decent chop.

Unlike most conventional 'glass hulls, the Signature 485SF is built with the unique RTM process, which uses vacuum injected resin to provide both strength and lightness. The bare boat weighs just 320kg, rivalling most aluminiums of the same size and enhancing shallow water operation.

Signature offers the 485SF in basic form with few frills, or as a more upmarket package with as many factory-fitted add-ons as the budget allows. It comes with side console in standard guise, but can be ordered as a centre console if so desired. I really like the side console configuration in smaller inshore boats, as it opens up the floor and lends itself well to stand-up-

and-cast type fishing. I'm not so sure about the actual design of the console, however, which offers very little room for mounting large screen displays behind the inclined Perspex screen.

Everything else about the 485SF's is about as good as it gets. Although it may not be for everyone, the long side rod locker is a very handy option, particularly for fly fishers. Being able to securely store expensive graphite fly and spin rods makes good sense, even if it does consume a little extra space down the port side.

The Signature's deck is totally moulded with a non-skid finish, and beneath the deck is full foam flotation material. You can fill the boat with water to the gunwales and it will still remain afloat, which is quite reassuring. The



The helm is neat and simple



Honda's BF80 is a superb engine

people at Haines Signature actually demonstrated this feature during a marine media day on the Gold Coast when the 485SF was first released back in April of 2008.

I've already touched on some of the optional extras available with the 485SF package, but the complete list is about as comprehensive as you'll find. There are no less than eight seating options to choose from to cover just about every fishing situation you're likely to encounter. The test boat was fitted with the traditional pair of upholstered low-mount bucket seats with three optional mounting positions, which is probably the most practical for all-round fishing.

Aside from the rod locker, his boat has storage compartments fore and aft,

as well as at the base of the console. Up front there's a decent anchor locker that will comfortably accommodate a small electric winch, and enough room up on the gunwale for a second display unit

and, of course, the electric motor base.

Haines Signature recommends outboards of between 40-100hp for the 485 hull, which is quite a variation. Those I've ridden in over the years have

been powered mainly by 60-70hp engines, and Pacific had opted for a new Honda BF80 on this one. It weighs in at around 165kg, which is up there near the maximum transom capacity. The engine certainly looks big, mainly because of the boat's super-low profile.

Tim and I launched the 485SF at Garden Island on a sunny December morning, along with 50 or more young kayakers obviously involved in a high school training course! The whole Garden Island/ North Arm scenario is basically what the 485SF was designed for, with mangroves, creeks, flats and a few more open water areas. We ran in stretches

less than 80cm deep, which proved no problem at all. It's an extremely buoyant little boat, which is precisely what's required in locations like this.

The test boat hadn't been fitted with a bow-mounted electric outboard, but I would expect that it will be wearing one before it's eventually sold. There is no doubt an electric opens up a heap of new possibilities for a boat of this style, particularly one that can be controlled from the console and is synched to the GPS.

The Honda BF80 certainly packs plenty of punch, emerging as an excellent power choice from the outset. Top speed

over the Adelaide Speedboat Club's racetrack was close to 80kph, which is pretty quick in a small, low profile boat like this one. Sitting so low to the water, it seems even faster! Dropping back to 50kph (3200rpm), the 485 cruises very comfortably and economically.

It's exceptionally stable for its weight – a prerequisite for any rig of this design – and can handle three anglers if so desired. The forward casting platform is spacious, and also creates a significant storage space beneath. Lure casting for bream, fly fishing or live baiting for Port River mullet are all covered by this terrific little outfit.



The 485 hull handles chop with ease



There's an amazing amount of fishing room



The live bait tank is baffled

HOW MUCH?

As tested – \$67,990

GENERAL INFO'

Length – 4.85m

Beam – 2.05m

Deadrise – 21 - 33 degrees

Height on trailer – 1.75m

Dry weight – 320kg

CAPACITIES

HP range – 40 - 100

Fuel – 120 litres

Load – 585kg

SUPPLIED BY

Pacific Marine

6/10 Tapleys Hill Road, Royal Park

Ph: (08) 8444 2444

E: plamb@pacificmarine.com.au

W: www.pacificmarine.com.au