

Black Watch 26

The weight of public opinion has led Black Watch to alter the cockpit design of its venerable 26-footer, resulting in a more spacious incarnation of company's popular little sportsfisher. David Granville reports

The Black Watch 26 is not a newcomer to readers of BlueWater. In fact, this pocket sportsfisher was one of the first boats we ever tested. However due to some major changes, we thought it was about time we revisited this little boat with a big heart.

The 26ft flybridge model tested here - now named the Black Watch 260 - is built by Deep Vee Marine on Queensland's Gold Coast. Deep Vee Marine currently builds the 25-34ft Black Watch models.

The Black Watch 26 has long been considered one of most seaworthy boats in its size. In fact, the 26s are know for their ability to defy their size when pitted against an ocean at its nastiest. So its not surprising that none of the changes to the 260 are below the waterline. No use fixing what ain't broken, hey?

By attending numerous boat shows around Australia for

several years, Deep Vee Marine heard a recurrent criticism of the 26: "Great little boat, but it would be even better if you could get rid of that raised engine box in the cockpit."

Well it took a while, but Deep Vee has finally taken notice of the boat-show public - and by raising the sheerline around the whole boat, the company has been able to raise the cockpit sole to form a totally flush deck. This results in an incredibly spacious and clutter-free cockpit for a 26-footer.

Not only is the flush deck a winner, but the extra 100mm below the cockpit sole creates an extremely spacious engineroom as well as providing additional buoyancy.

This extra space below deck allows amazing versatility when it comes to power options. The 260 can accommodate anything from a 230hp four-cylinder diesel to a 320hp V8 petrol in either sterndrive or vee-drive configurations. There may even be enough room under there for a twin four-cylinder installation.

STANDARD-BEARER

The Black Watch 260 Flybridge is extremely well appointed for an 8m boat. It comes complete with many of the standard features we're used to seeing on much larger boats.

In the bow is a big double berth that has good storage capacity below. Sidepockets are located above the vee-berth and reading lights are located on the forward

bulkhead. Vinyl headliner is used throughout, and an overhead deck hatch provides natural light and ventilation.

Just aft of the vee-berth on the starboard side is a fully-enclosed head. The test boat was fitted with an electric toilet and plumbed holding tank, which was an option over the standard manual toilet. The head also features a toilet-roll holder, towel rail, mirror and 12V lighting - but no shower. The head could also do with an extractor fan.

On the port side of the saloon is a small dinette that can seat four, although this is a bit cosy. The dropdown table and infill cushions also form another berth, and although the manufacturer claims that it's double, it could only really accommodate one adult or two kids.

On the starboard side of the saloon is a compact galley featuring a Granicote benchtop, small sink and single-burner stove. The test boat was also fitted with an optional 12V refrigerator.

DEGREES OF SEPARATION

The standard Black Watch 260 Flybridge comes with an open bulkhead and removable storm covers separating the saloon and the cockpit. On the test boat, though, the owner opted for a solid bulkhead with windows and a lockable central door.

The cockpit features a flush fibreglass floor with a non-skid surface. A hinged engineroom hatch features a gas

strut that allows adequate access for checking oil and water levels.

Removable fishboxes on either side of the engine hatch allow you to access the sides of the engine. The test boat was fitted with an optional Volvo KAMD 43, 230hp diesel with duoprop sterndrive.

A small sink with storage below is located on the port side at the forward end of the cockpit, while an ice chest is located on the starboard side under the flybridge ladder. An optional 200lt livewell was incorporated into the transom of the test boat, and the optional teak covering boards really look the goods.

There are four rodholders in the covering boards as standard, but serious fishos might want to add more and also remove the fibreglass swim platform. There is no transom door either, so any big ones you want to keep have to come over the side.

GET ON UP

Access to the flybridge is via a ladder on the starboard side. As you would expect, the flybridge is fairly compact - although there is enough room on the dash to mount some decent electronics.

The test boat featured optional deluxe helmchairs for helmsman and passenger, and although they were very comfortable, the standard bench seat may be better - at least that way you can sit side-on and watch the wake.

An optional folding targa arch incorporating a bimini top and three-sided clears were fitted to the test boat. As the test boat was bound for the US, the folding targa arch was included so that the boat could be towed. Outriggers were to be fitted when the boat got to the US.

Freshwater and fuel-tank fillers are located on the sidedecks. Freshwater capacity is 136lt, while standard fuel capacity is 450lt. However, the owner of the test boat has opted for a fuel-tank upgrade to 645lt.

Stern, midships and bow cleats are standard, as is the quality stainless-steel bowrail. An optional electric anchor winch was fitted to the test boat.

FOREGONE CONCLUSIONS

Although we ran the 260 offshore from the Gold Coast on a calm day, we weren't really there to test its seaworthiness. Indeed, that was established a long time ago.

I have been on Black Watch 26s in some pretty ordinary conditions and I can vouch for their excellent seakeeping ability.

We did have a bit of a play, though, and noted that the boat steered very well off the wheel - even in reverse. The extra 100mm or so on the sheerline will also help prevent water entering the cockpit when backing up to some degree.

The 230hp Volvo diesel felt like a good match, with an economical 24kt cruise reached at 3350rpm. At Wide Open Throttle we reached 29kt at 3955rpm.

I must admit, I'm a bit taken by the new Black Watch 260 Flybridge. Like most people, I always thought the 26 was a great little boat, but I was also turned off by the raised cockpit floor. Can't use that excuse anymore, can we?

Pursuit 3000 Offshore
PRICE AS TESTED \$161,988
OPTIONS FITTED
Engine upgrade, fuel capacity upgrade, transom livewell, teak covering boards, hot water system, stainless steel targa arch, windlass, refrigerator, cabin bulkhead, electric toilet, deluxe helm seats.
PRICED FROM \$123,500
GENERAL
Material: Solid GRP hull, balsa-cored decks and superstructure with vinylester resin
Type: Deep-vee monohull
LOA: 8.87m (29' 2")
Beam: 3.00m (9' 9")
Draft: 0.87m (2' 9")
Deadrise: 19° at transom
Weight (dry): 2750kg (6000lb)
CAPACITIES
Berths: Four
Fuel: 645lt (170 USgal)

Water: 136lt (30 USgal)

ENGINE

Make/Model: Volvo KAMD43

Type; Inline six-cylinder turbo diesel

Rated HP: 230 @ 3800rpm

Displacement: 3.6lt

Weight: 534kg (1177lb)

Gearboxes (Make/ratio): Volvo 1.78:1

Props: Volvo Duoprop C3 counter-rotating
stainless steel

SUPPLIED BY Deep Vee Marine, Southport, QLD
tel (07) 5526 3945

All figures supplied as per manufacturers
specifications. Prices in Australian dollars for
Australian delivered boats unless otherwise stated.