

HAINES SIGNATURE 500F



Previously marketed as the 495F, this neat little cuddy has long been among Signature's most popular inshore fishing rigs. It's neat, compact and a snack to tow behind a smaller SUV or family wagon.

Immediately noticeable as you climb aboard is the general standard of build and finish. Like all Signatures, this one features immaculate gelcoat and paint work, with all fittings and hardware straight from the top shelf. I doubt there's a 'glass boat builder' in the country that presents its products as

well as the Haines Group.

The variable deadrise hull, which starts off at 33 degrees at the forefoot and tapers back to 21 degrees at the transom, is legendary for its soft riding characteristics. It's this hull design that has won Signature so many friends over an extended period, and is essentially the key factor in the brand's long term sales success.

Outboards of between 60-100hp are recommended for the 500F, and Pacific Marine had fitted the test model with a new Honda BF90. This is a four cylinder



The dash console is compact, but spacious

four stroke with programmed electronic ignition that delivers the full 90hp at 5800rpm. It weighs 166kg, which isn't the lightest in its class, but seems to balance well with the Signature hull.

The 500F hull weighs in at a tad over 630kg dry, which translates to an average highway towing mass of around 1100 kilos. It's a breeze to launch and retrieve, making life easy for those who regularly go boating single handed.

Cuddy cabs are quite a sensible option when you're talking 5m or under, and this one offers a decent amount of fishing room in the cockpit. There's still a fair volume of under cover space up front, which is essential when the family is on board, but fishing three out the back is no problem at all. Cuddy height is fine for those of average stature, and there is ample dry storage beneath the day-bunks for safety gear, spare clothing and any other bulky items that need to be kept away from the elements. Carport storage height is just a smidgen over 2m, which is definitely a consideration for many potential owners.

In standard form the 500F comes quite well equipped. An auto bilge pump



Climbing onto the plane off Largs Bay

is fitted, as is a battery switch, two small live bait tanks, a drop-down aft lounge, a couple of rod holders and a 12 volt power plug. Mechanical steering can be upgraded to hydraulic without a drastic price increase, you can opt for plumbed bait tanks, 27MHz and VHF radios, electric anchor winch and a heap of other handy accessories if the budget permits. I like the Signature bait table, which folds up when not required and presents no impediment to those fishing over the stern.

75 litres of fuel beneath the deck will provide a useful operating range, particularly with the incredibly economical Honda BF90 on the transom. Maximum load rating for this hull is 620 kilograms, but I would guess you'd notice a drop in performance with more than 450kg on board. Three guys and their gear for a day's fishing would be my guess at optimum load level.

The morning for our pre-scheduled



The Signature fold-up bait board is excellent

test run turned out to be calm, with light offshore winds and a low dodge tide. The carpark at North Haven was three quarters full, with many launching early to take advantage of the late summer blue crab run. The Signature slid easily of its trailer, the Honda kicked into life with the first turn

of the key, and we were set to head off. Interestingly, this boat had arrived from the Haines Signature factory (Queensland) at around 4pm on the previous afternoon, and the tech's at Pacific Marine worked into the evening to fit the motor and have the rig in basic usable condition. With me spending

limited time in Adelaide these days, co-ordinating on-water tests is never as easy as it used to be!

As I'd anticipated, the 500F climbs onto the plane with minimal acceleration. The hull is extremely efficient in this regard, and also travels nicely down at trolling speeds of 4-9 knots. So much research and development went into this hull in the early days, there has been no need to make significant changes. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised to find exactly the same boat filling exactly the same market niche ten years down the track!

In typical Signature fashion, the 500F handles at speed as though it is on rails. The deep vee hull hangs on nicely in tight turns and is extremely responsive to trim adjustment. Over flat water top speed is in the order of 37 knots, and the boat lopes along comfortably (and very economically) at 26-28. It's very predictable to drive, too, making it ideal for less experienced operators; in fact, I'd suggest the 500F would make the ideal entry level boat.

Like most deep vees, you'd expect the hull to be perhaps a little less

stable at rest than some others with smaller deadrise, but this factor is offset somewhat by the generous beam of 2.01m and substantial weight. We were able to move around comfortably for the entire test run, and I'd say it would make a decent fishing platform in most conditions.

Although our test run venue precluded any bumpy water evaluation, I have no doubt this boat would carve its way nicely through the Gulf chop. That's precisely what deep vees do, and why they are so well suited to the conditions we fish in on a regular basis.



Honda's BF90 is ideal for the 5m Signature hull



Twin-tiered side pockets offer plenty of cockpit storage

HOW MUCH?

As tested - \$53,950

GENERAL INFO'

Length - 5.08m
Beam - 2.01m
Deadrise - 21 - 33 degrees
Highway towing weight - 1100kg

CAPACITIES

HP range - 60-100
Fuel - 75 litres

SUPPLIED BY

Pacific Marine
Corner Tapleys Hill Road and Old Port Road, Royal Park
Ph: (08) 8444 2444
E: sales@pacificmarine.com.au
W: www.pacificmarine.com.au



HAINES Signature™ 640SF



DESIGNED BY ANGLERS FOR ANGLERS

Available in centre console with optional T-top or side console, the 640SF is versatile, modular and can provide you with a fishing platform that challenges what a sports fishing vessel can offer.



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