

Changes made to **Surtees** **GF 700**

A respected boat designer and manufacturer once said, "If you have a great performing hull don't be tempted to tinker with it. After all, the water hasn't changed." Grant Dixon checks out the latest poster boat from Bay of Plenty manufacturer, Surtees.

Built for the cancelled 2020 Hutchwilco NZ Boat Show, the Surtees 700 Game Fisher Open features the manufacturer's proven seven-metre hull, with several changes to the topsides. The vessel, finished in a deep Tasman Blue paint job topped with a full covering of Mocha-coloured SeaDek, makes a striking first impression.

Surtees Boats has a reputation for innovation dating back to its founding days under the creative hand of Neil Surtees, who introduced the likes of the flooding keel, a feature now part of many manufacturer's hull designs.

So, when Fishing Boats NZ Ltd invited *NZ Fishing News* to review their latest Surtees demonstrator, I was looking forward to more innovation from the manufacturer. To be fair, the tweaks have been subtle rather than earth-shattering, but combine to create a well-dressed, good performing and practical fishing vessel.

Three features immediately caught my attention. In the centre of the transom is a new style of bait/rigging station which now incorporates four rod holders, two knife slots and a tackle drawer for all those essentials such as pliers, iki spikes, braid scissors, hook files and pre-tied replacement traces – the sorts of things you want close

at hand but not necessarily on the bait board itself. There is excellent dry storage in the transom locker immediately under the bait station. Surtees have retained the isolation switching in this space where it is easily accessed while dropping the house and start batteries into a sealed compartment below. The bait station also incorporates provision for a ski pole should it be needed to keep the family entertained between fishing trips.

The helm position has had a make-over. Other Surtees of similar size I have been on have always had the larger electronics screen-mounted on the dash. On this particular model, the 16" Simrad NSS EVO 3 unit was flush-



Part of the re-jigged bait station, the batteries have their own compartment with additional dry storage adjacent to the switches



An upgraded feature on the Surtees is the bait station; Right: SeaDek has been added to every practical surface to provide comfort, protection, and good grip underfoot.



Left: Fishing Boats NZ's apprentice technician Brooke Browne showed us how it was done, catching dinner just a few minutes from the ramp.

mounted with the transducer fitted through-hull. A row of rocker switches was placed on their own 'ledge' running the width of the helm station – handily placed and easy to see and operate. There was plenty of space for the Lone Star 6X2 drum winch control and VHF. A stereo was not fitted, but there was no shortage of space if needed, along with space for an autopilot. The trim tabs were operated with a controller conveniently placed beside the throttle.

There is an excellent vision all around, with each of the three forward windscreen panels kept

clear by individual wipers. Sliding, tinted side windows assist with vision and airflow.

The third change was the introduction of what Surtees are calling a 'mini-galley', located against the bulkhead in front of the passenger's king and queen seats. This is a simple but practical affair, consisting of two shelves. The top one is large enough to contain a camping-style two-burner gas cooker and is drained; the one underneath is ideal for storage of essentials such as boxes of cutlery, plates, kettles or even a small LPG cylinder. When not used in galley-

mode, it is a great spot for bins, sunglasses and the like, not that there is any shortage of storage aboard. A four-cup holder is located on the cabin side as part of the galley set-up.

Boats this size are good for a night or two away, and the Surtees has been set up for this. There is an electric flush toilet up forward with squab infills sitting over it, which creates a comfortable sleeping space for two people, and with a rear infill, will take three at a pinch. Add a cockpit road cover and a camping mattress, and there is room to sleep on the cockpit floor – a

Fuel Economy

Figures taken in calm conditions with no wind or tide, from the Yamaha engine management system and Simrad GPS.

Revs (RPM)	Speed (knots)	Fuel *(NM/L)
2500	8.0	.61
3000	12.6	.80
4000	21.8	.80
5000	29.1	.57
5700 (WOT)	33.1	.45

*(nautical miles per litre)

great place for the worst snorer on board!

The cabin locks with a substantial sliding door and is fully carpeted. A large hatch aids the flow of air while at anchor, as well as access to the anchoring system.



From left: A king and queen seating arrangement is on the port side – and has room for a small fridge if needed; Surtees has incorporated a new helm station that will take up to 16" screens, flush-mounted; Practical, comfortable and stylish – the helm seat with the removable passenger seat behind it.



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Clockwise from top: Shelving that runs the length of the cockpit makes great storage for rods, gaffs and the like; A centrally located sump houses the bilge pump; Provision has been made for a gas cooker in what is described as a 'mini-galley' located in front of the passenger seat; A feature of the boat is the Surtees clip-on rod and dive bottle holders and seat.

Owners wanting a seven-metre Surtees have a choice as to cabin length – it can be made either 1.3 or 1.8 metres long, depending on your priorities – an owner predominantly wanting a day fisher will go for the shorter cabin and others wanting overnighting options will order the longer version. The choice is either cockpit or cabin space.

There is good storage under the port side king and queen seats – enough space to fit a fridge. The test boat had a 56-litre Ikey-Tek bin with an upholstered lid, but there is plenty of space for a larger size, and consequently more ice, in the cockpit. The 700 Game Fisher also has a large 325-litre fuel tank. This offers plenty of range with the 200HP Yamaha F200 XCA fly-by-wire four-stroke on the transom, the fuel figures for which are elsewhere in this review.

As the name suggests, this boat is well

set up for fishing. Apart from the new rigging station there two tuna tubes located in the transom on the port side, balanced on the starboard side with a large livebait tank above the step-through. Access is gained to the caged swim step and dive ladder through a drop-down transom door – all very neat and tidy.

Long-run shelving either side of the cockpit will take a standard soft-baiting or slow-pitch rod, not to mention gaffs, tag poles, boat hooks and other elongated paraphernalia. They are lined with SeaDek for protection and noise reduction. This boat is one of the best advertisements I have seen for SeaDek – it is everywhere on the 700 Game Fisher, providing protection, sound-proofing and great grip underfoot.

There is no shortage of either rod holders

SeaDek has been added to every practical surface to provide comfort, protection, and good grip underfoot.

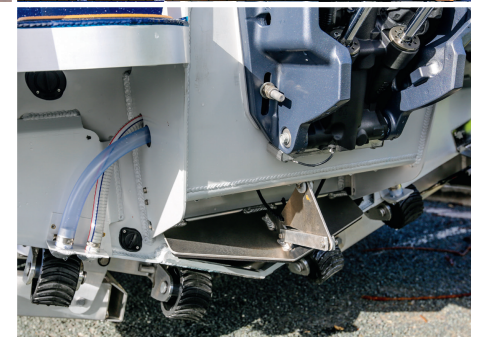
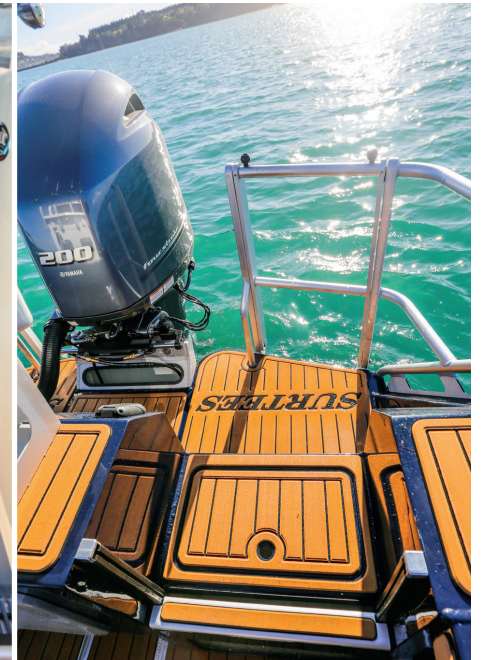


Clockwise from top: The 200HP Yamaha powers the boat nicely; A sliding lockable door secures the cabin area as well as offering privacy when needed; A caged swim step adds to the boat's fishability; A flooding keel which can retain up to 380 litres of water adds stability at rest and weight when underway in rough seas.

or handholds, with 18 of the former placed around the boat. The ones most often used while fishing – those set in the gunwale tops – have drink holders placed adjacent to them, which make great spots to secure lures and sinkers while underway, not to mention the

occasional refreshment.

The helm seat, in this instance, is a single pedestal-mounted Sofrider, multi-adjustable deluxe upholstered seat, with roll-back bolster. It can be turned through 180 degrees, allowing an angler to sit in comfort and fish.



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Specifications

Surtees 700 Game Fisher Open

LOA	7.0m
Beam	2.34m
Hull Bottom	6mm
Hull Sides	4mm
Topsides	3mm
Tow Weight	1950kg (approx.)
Deadrise	20 degrees
Water ballast	380 litres
Fuel	325 litres
Length (on trailer, engine down)	8.115m
Load	7 pax (965kg)
Recommended HP	140-250
Price (as tested)	\$159,956
Rigs from	\$111,271

Boat supplied by Fishing Boats NZ, North Shore, Auckland.



A fully-rollered Alloy Trailers Ltd trailer get the Surtees to where it needs to be.

Surtees have developed several clip-on accessories. These include additional seating, a dive-bottle holder, and two and four-piece rod holders. These have a base which simply slips over the outside edge of the gunwale shelving and can be moved around as required – very practical, and can be configured to each owner's or individual trip's needs. Dive bottles can be tricky to store safely due to their weight and shape – the Surtees solution is a good one.

The rig is towed on an alloy tandem-axle, multi-roller trailer built by Alloy Trailers NZ Ltd. It is fitted with standard over-ride hydraulic brakes, and there is a provision to add a boat catch and an electric winch.

Performance

The weather for the boat test saw little or no wind and the sea as calm as a bathtub the morning we launched from Gulf Harbour. The only slight indication of the Surtees's excellent seakeeping reputation came when we crossed a naval ship's wake, and that hardly caused a ripple on our early-morning coffees.

This was the first time the rig had been in the water, but the Fishing Boats NZ crew had got it close to perfect first time up, outboard propping and fit-up wise. The only glitch was with the trim tabs which did not always retract properly, a quick fix back in the workshop I imagine.

At idling speed, the boat could be slowed enough to troll for

trout – 1.5-2.5 knots. At marlin lure speed – eight knots – the burn was .61 nautical miles per litre at 2500 rpm. With the throttle wide open, the top speed was 33.1 knots, burning 4.5 litres per nautical mile at 5700 rpm.

These numbers will no doubt change slightly with a few hours on the clock and a bit of tweaking, but they are a fair indication of the expected performance. Given that there are 325 litres in the tank, and allowing for a 25-litre safety margin, if you were staying away for two day's game fishing and allowed a generous 100nm running at 4000rpm and trolling for 16 hours at 2500rpm, you would come home with fuel in the tank.

Surtees has a reputation for its soft-riding performance due to its Razortech hull design. At rest, the brand's stability is enhanced with a flooding keel and the 380 litres of trapped water can be retained by a shut-off gate when underway to improve performance in heavy weather. The hull comes with a 10-year warranty and is built to last using its Tough Deck rigid hull construction.

In conclusion

This boat has eye-appeal with its Tasman Blue livery, set off with the Mocha SeaDek. It features several innovations that enhance the boating and fishing experience and with the addition of a set of out- and centre-riggers, along with its range, this rig is an appealing sportfishing vessel.

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