

MAXIMUM ASSAULT

Fresh to the market comes a new locally manufactured heavy duty RIB model, albeit with an imported hull from South Africa, courtesy of Gemini Inflatables. Freddy Foote jumps aboard the new Assault 890HT on its maiden voyage.

Just over a year ago, I tested the Gemini 850 Waverider, a big heavy duty centre console, designed to handle plenty of horsepower and to tackle some big water.

Now, with a little bit of kiwi know-how, essentially the same hull is available with a full GRP hardtop section.

Essentially how the Assault 890HT was born was that there was demand for an 8m plus RIB with a hardtop for the local kiwi market. So the New Zealand Gemini dealer, Peter Carlson at Family Boats, put his head together with Mark Skinner from AFL and developed a full GRP hardtop and cabin section to be retrofitted to the 850 Gemini hull here in New Zealand.

The end result is a great looking boat that provides the protection of a hardtop, yet is still fully capable of handling like a RIB should. The hardtop adds an insignificant 200kg or so, causing a slight drop in performance.



Gemini is one of the original manufacturers of the RIB and on a world scale is pretty hardcore with regard to the product it produces. The majority of the models Gemini produces cater for the military market, so it was a great surprise to me that it hadn't already done a hardtop model.

"Gemini RIBs are mainly used for commercial or military use but quite a few are built for the pleasure market; those users who want more of a work boat rather than a luxury style RIB like some of the other inflatables on the market," says Peter Carlson.

"We saw a need for a boat of this design and style for the New Zealand market and have a queue of people waiting to see the finished product, and have also had some enquiry from overseas Gemini customers."

Like the 850 Waverider the 890HT features an aluminium keel strip which is attached to a box section on the keel of the boat. This box section is an intricate part of the mould and it sees the box section filled internally with chop strand matting that is manipulated into a rope type length. Gemini then uses extra woven roving to form over the top of this to make a solid keel internally. The alloy keel protector is screwed onto the outside of this solid box section. This allows the boat to run up on beaches or rocks without damaging the keel or if you miss the trailer when you are recovering the boat.

The boat arrives as a bare hull, fitted with the Hypalon tubes. The hardtop



The helm area is clean and tidy, extra ventilation is provided via large sliding side windows.

and cabin section is then fitted, and the internal layout is customized to suit whatever the customer should choose. Fit-out is a joint effort between Assault Boats and Hayden Bennett of Pro Install.

The test boat was fitted with a single pedestal helm seat which was fully adjustable and was complemented with a footrest below the steering wheel. The driving position was comfortable, both when seated and standing, with the helm controls within easy reach. Wipers are available on both sides of the curved glass screen, and storage shelves are available on both sides of the helm area – great to store drinks bottles, keys, phones, charts, etc.

Passenger seating consists of an L-shaped settee setup with storage space underneath. Assault Boats has also fitted a bolster insert for passengers to lean against whilst standing and facing forward when underway.



Storage lockers in the transom take care of battery stowage.

When not fitted, the bolster is easily removed and stored under the seat. A backrest easily moves forward, so passengers, or lazier fishermen can sit and face into the cockpit. Twin pedestals or back-to-back king/queen seats are also options.

Forward in the cabin, the squabs are all fully upholstered and a toilet is located under one of the forward seat squabs, a sliding door provides privacy and security.

A hatch on the foredeck provides offers extra light and ventilation whilst also providing access to the anchor locker and helm operated freefall winch, another of the features that is built into the Gemini when it arrives in New Zealand. When you need to



The aft dive bottle holder is a stylish and functional feature.



go forward, the wide tubes provide plenty of surface area and in fact it's a lot easier to walk around than most cabin boats. Handrails on the hardtop are well placed for when you are navigating around the boat.

The hull and deck are self draining; the big scuppers aft being a prominent feature, making it an ideal boat for diving where there is often a bit of water coming onboard.

All the Gemini models are built pretty tough; this particular boat is built with military grade Hypalon for the tubes – in fact the tubes are doubly strong, having two skins of Hypalon. Additional features on the tubes include blow off valves which means that as the air pressure inside the tubes increases with the warmth of the sun it will allow air to escape, lessening the stress on the seams.



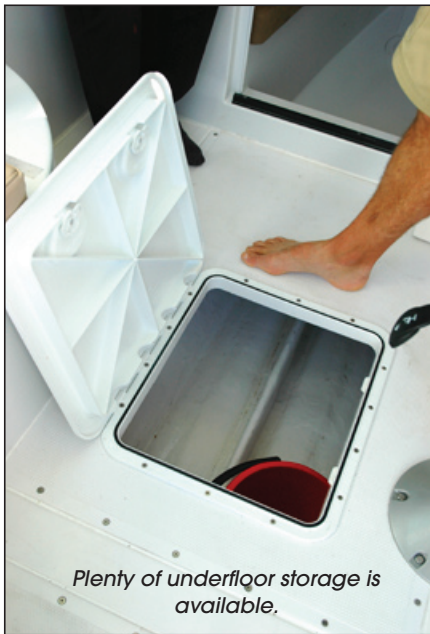
The L shaped passenger seating has a flip-flop bolster that can be moved forward.

A larger storage locker is under the floor just to the left of the helm seat, and a secondary storage locker is located under the floor aft.

Our test boat was also fitted with a bait board/ski pole and a very stylish stainless dive bottle holder which sits centre of the transom in the cockpit.

As I mentioned earlier, this was the maiden voyage for the 890HT, with the boat's hardtop section only being fully finished a matter of hours before I got my hands on it. In fact, the guys were still washing it as it was pulling out of the factory!

Prior to the test, we had plans for shooting out to Great Barrier and back, but it didn't work out due to time constraints, so a blast around Auckland harbour early one evening in late October would have to suffice. Not the ideal test conditions – water conditions were relatively calm, however on our return trip back to Okahu Bay, there was enough of a chop to get a feeling for how the big 890HT would handle.



Plenty of underfloor storage is available.

As far as performance and comfort of ride at speed are concerned, the 890HT is certainly up there. A RIB with a length of 8.5m and a 26-degree deadrise is going to go well! The fact that these hulls were developed for the turbulent waters off the coast of South Africa is testament to that.

Our test Assault 890HT was powered by a Yamaha F300 4-stroke V8 outboard, and really it was ideal for such a craft. With the V8 Yamaha at full noise it gave a healthy top speed of 48.5mph at 5500rpm. The magic 50mph mark is certainly achievable with a few more hours on the clock, bearing in mind that the previous day the engine was sitting in a box waiting to be fitted!

The hull is designed for serious horsepower and would easily handle a 350hp outboard or twin 200hp. A stern-drive option is also available.

If required, over 600 litres of fuel can be stowed under the cockpit sole, giving this boat an extremely long range; but usually 200-300 litres with a 4-stroke or direct-injected two-stroke outboard will be sufficient for most people's boating needs. This particular boat was fitted with the standard 250L tank.

The position of the tubes is very critical and in the 890HT, I noticed that the aft sections of the tubes seem to run in the water when underway, however when stationary they provide the superb stability that pontoon boats and RIBs are noted for.

Overall, I loved the 890HT. But it wasn't



The new hardtop section looks great on the 890HT.



The enclosed hardtop is a great feature, and will be popular during the winter boating months.

so many years ago that RIBs were strictly for big boat tenders, divers and rescue organisations. Anything over 5m was a big boat and most were open centre consoles or at best featured small cuddy cabins. How times have changed and while the full cabin RIB is still only a very niche market, it is without doubt growing and the new 890HT fits that niche perfectly. It's one of the few RIBs or GRP boats on the market that will allow you to customize the internal layout for seating.

It also looked great on the water and performed well – if the hull is good enough for various military agencies around the world then it's good enough for you and me.

Standard features on Test Boat

- ✓Heavy duty Hypalon tubes
- ✓Glass screen
- ✓Anchor locker and bow sprit
- ✓Provision for electric toilet
- ✓250L fuel tank
- ✓Bilge pump
- ✓LED navigation lights
- ✓6-way switch panel.

Notable Options on Test Boat

- ✓Yamaha 300 V8
- ✓Steering upgrade (for V8)
- ✓Maxwell auto capstan
- ✓Electric toilet
- ✓L-shaped seating
- ✓Side windows
- ✓Raymarine C80 GPS/ chart plotter + Raymarine VHF
- ✓Fusion I-Pod stereo
- ✓Ski pole
- ✓Dive tank holder
- ✓Bait board
- ✓EPIRB
- ✓Fire extinguisher.

Boat Supplied by: Assault Boats
 Manufacturer: Assault Boats/ Family Boats, Ph 021 988 815
 email: sales@assaultboats.co.nz

Make: Assault
 Model: 890 Assault HT
 Price as Tested: \$165,000
 Packages from: \$99,000
 Designer : Gemini, Mark Skinner/AFL & Peter Carlson and the team at Assault Boats

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Material: | GRP Hull & Decks, Hypalon Tubes |
| Type: | RIB |
| LOA: | 8.9m |
| LOH: | 8.5m |
| Beam: | 2.9m |
| Hull Config: | Deep V |
| Deadrise: | 30 degrees |
| Trailerable Weight: | 2450kg est. |
| Height on Trailer: | 3.1m |
| Engine Capacity: | 200 - 400hp |
| Power Options: | Outboard, Sterndrive or waterjet |
| Fuel Capacity: | 250L underfloor |

Performance

| | |
|----------|----------|
| 1000 rpm | 5.4 mph |
| 1500 rpm | 8.0 mph |
| 2000 rpm | 10.0 mph |
| 2500 rpm | 16.0 mph |
| 3000 rpm | 22.5 mph |
| 3500 rpm | 27.5 mph |
| 4000 rpm | 33.5 mph |
| 4500 rpm | 39.0 mph |
| 5000 rpm | 43.0 mph |
| 5500 rpm | 48.5 mph |

Speeds recorded on a Lowrance GPS

Engines

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|---------------|----------|
| Make: | Yamaha |
| Model: | F300AETU |
| Horsepower: | 300 |
| Cyl. Config.: | V8 |
| Displacement: | 5400cc |
| Max RPM: | 5500 |
| Propeller: | 19" |
| Retail price: | \$41,247 |

Trailer

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Make: | Assault Boats/ Voyager |
| Price: | \$10,300 |
| Braked: | Yes |
| Rollers: | Multi |
| Suspension: | Leaf springs |
| Suspension: | Jockey wheel, submersible lights, |