

Boat Review: **Assault 890HT**

Assaulted and lovin' it



There's always an impact when New Zealand and South Africa clash on the sports field, and the same can be said of the collaboration that is the new Assault 890HT. **Grant Dixon** reports.

Photos by Mike Hunter and Grant Dixon



Above: The Assault 890HT makes an impressive sight under full throttle on the Waitemata Harbour.
Right: The custom dive-tank rack, bait-board and tow point illustrate the diverse range of activities the boat can be used for.



If getting to your favourite fishing grounds or dive site in speed and comfort is a priority, you might like to check out the Assault 890HT from Auckland's Family Boats.

The company has produced a unique international rig, combining the proven performance of South African Gemini hulls with Kiwi boatbuilding and design skills to produce fibreglass topsides to suit local conditions.

On the Voyager trailer, the Assault 890HT looks a majestic beast, and its proven bloodlines come to the fore when on the water, spurred on by a big-hearted, Yamaha V8 four-stroke.

A multi-purpose machine, the test boat has been set up by Family Boat's managing director Peter Carlson to serve a variety of purposes, including fishing, diving and family fun. It looks the part and has the performance to match, with a top speed of over 48mph (77.2kph) registered on the GPS.

While a 10-knot-wind afternoon on the Waitemata Harbour provided few challenges to the 30-degree deep-vee hull, the odd passing ferry and launch wake gave a hint of the craft's capabilities. In a recent 200km Poker Run, the boat finished a creditable third in the single outboard section, beaten only by designated performance/race boats, which caught the

Assault only once calm water was reached.

Carlson says it will maintain a high cruising speed even in rough conditions, with the crew invariably backing off before the boat does.

Despite the deep vee, the Assault is a comfortable, predictable platform at rest thanks to the Hypalon pontoons that extend well down the hull sides.

The layout is practical, with just a handful of minor changes planned for production models. It is also quite unique, in that it is a full cabin design, rather than the walk-around normally associated with pontoon craft.

Forward are two vee-berths, suitable for even the longest adult, and there is an in-fill to create a cosy double bunk. An electric marine head is located centrally under the squabs, and a large hatch gives access to the ground tackle and Maxwell 500 winch if required. There is ample stowage under the berths, while a narrow, curved shelf that follows the cabin line beneath the window stores the likes of charts and other small items.

A sliding, lockable cabin door provides both security and privacy.

The helm station features a single seat on a Softrider pedestal, with the instruments and switch panels all within easy reach. Dominating the dash is a Raymarine



Above: At the business end of the test boat is a Yamaha V8 four-stroke outboard; There is plenty of space for two people to overnight in comfort.



Above: All instruments and controls are comfortably within reach of the helmsman; An electric marine head fits in under the forward berth



Top: One of the boat's features is the full-length cabin; Most pontoon boats are full walk-around.

C80 chartplotter/sounder, along with a Raymarine Ray54 VHF and Fusion iPod-capable stereo. The Yamaha Active fly-by-wire throttle/gear lever is well located for good helming control – even in the rough stuff. Control is aided further by the addition of a top-of-the line French Le Comete and Schmitt Hydro steering system, needed to combat the torque produced by the big V8 Yamaha.

On the passenger side is a single, removable bolster for support when going

forward, along with an L-shaped seat that features a swinging bolster backrest, with further stowage underneath.

There is no shortage of the latter aboard the Assault. As mentioned, there are large areas under the cabin squabs and further space under the cockpit sole. The test craft had a standard 250-litre tank, but the fuel capacity can be more than doubled with the addition of further underfloor tanks. This would be at the expense of some stowage.

Centrally located across the transom is a bait-station, ski-pole and dive-tank rack, all custom-built by stainless steel specialists Manta Marine. There are two large scuppers in the stern to quickly clear of large volumes of water, if ever required. The boat's batteries are stored on a shelf in the stern lockers, keeping them above deck level – a good safety feature.

The gunwale/pontoon height comes to mid-thigh – high enough to provide security, but low enough to allow divers to sit on them and flop over the side easily.

From a fishing perspective, the only criticism is a lack of 'toe room', reducing the amount of support available from the gunwale when playing a decent fish. Cockpit lighting is provided to illuminate the work area, and there is also room in the cockpit for a removable live-bait tank to be fitted.

The advantage of Assault boats is that they are easily customised. The internals are created using 17 different moulds, giving the owner flexibility of layout. The test boat was not particularly well set up for sportfishing, with just two decent rodholders. But the addition of outriggers and more rodholders in the shape of a special stainless frame that sits over part of the

pontoons, port and starboard, is an effective solution. A rocket launcher for more rod storage is yet to be added to the test boat.

The pontoons are manufactured from double-skinned, military-grade Hypalon and feature blow-off valves that automatically adjust pressure in the tubes as they expand with any temperature increase, taking the strain off the seams.

One last, but quite important feature is the good number of handholds around the boat – and this is to be further enhanced with stainless handholds, which will be run beneath the hardtop, giving passengers more bracing options when underway.

The test boat came with a price tag of \$165,000, inclusive of hull, motor, electronics and a braked trailer. The basic hull and 200hp Yamaha motor/Voyager trailer package starts at \$99,900 and can be spec'ed up from there



Assault 890HT

construction	GRP hulls, Hypalon pontoons
loa	8.9m
loh	8.5m
beam	2.90m
internal cockpit beam	1.7m
deadrise	30 degrees
trailerable weight	2450kg
height on trailer	3.0m
recommended hp	200-400
fuel capacity	250 litres
outboard	Yamaha F300AETu V8
trailer	Voyager multi-roller and over-ride braked
Price (as tested)	\$165,000
Packages from	\$99,900



The 30-degree vee and fine entry make for great rough water performance.