



# Freedom 6.4 Seasport

Revolutionary new bottom design makes the new Freedom 6.4m one of the most driver-friendly craft to hit the market in a long time. Test report James Hill, photos by Baitbox.

**F**reedom has been one of the more interesting players on the trailer boat scene for about a decade. In that time the Noosa-based brand has built up quite a strong market foothold by providing attractively styled, well-priced fibreglass boats.

Indeed, Freedom has been one of the few fibreglass brands to really take the tinnies on in terms of price. This market approach has certainly been a winner for the Freedom team and this summer the company has moved to a larger factory and introduced a number of new models.

In the last season the Freedom company has also been tinkering with new ideas and has come up with one

of the most exciting new concepts to hit the boating market in years.

The new Seasport 6.4 is the first of the Freedom models to feature a revolutionary 'tunnel' bottom shape within the bottom.

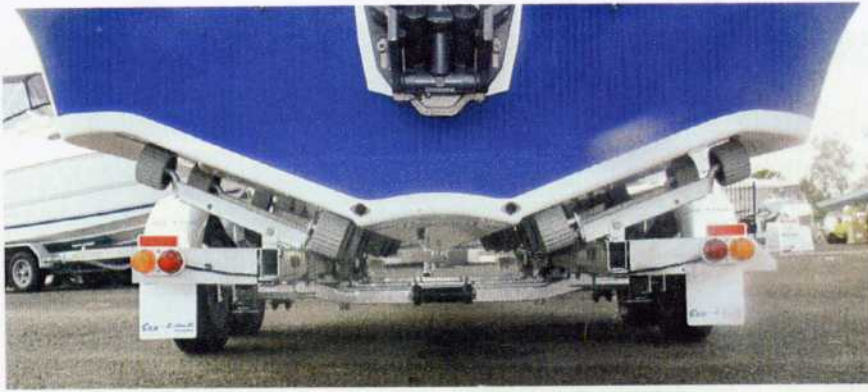
A recent test session in the new Seasport confirmed this simple addition is a real break-through. While the hull is a direct development of the earlier Freedom Elite 620, it handles far better due to the moulded tunnel, or hollow down the centreline of the Vee bottom.

While many boats have a flat 'runner plank' down the keel line, this narrow tunnel provides many more benefits. What it does is direct solid

water flow over the propeller at all times. This improves both performance and fuel consumption.

Another major benefit is the boat can be accelerated into a full plane without having to trim the motor down. This also means you can drive the Seasport over very shallow water without hurting the motor. These benefits make the Seasport one of the most user-friendly boats I've had the pleasure of sampling lately.

In an emergency, less experienced people in your crew could take the helm and drive the boat. And, of course, if the motor is properly trimmed you only gain even better performance and/or fuel consumption.



Earlier this summer we took the Seasport for a test run on the Gold Coast with Freedom CEO, Glen Grams. There's no doubt the tunnel is doing good things under the water and you can see it in the way the Seasport easily accelerates onto the plane from a standing start.

**Design:** The 6.4m Seasport is a modern sports cab design that incorporates a lot of what boat buyers are looking for these days. Apart from the low sports cab and curved windscreen it's got a stylish fastback transom, aerodynamic deck line and optional fibreglass targa arch.

Similarities with the earlier 620 Elite are obvious, yet the new model delivers more cockpit space and a better performance.

Apart from the tunnel, the bottom features a sharp Vee entry that flows back to deep Vee hull of about 22-degrees on the transom.

The bottom also features several lifting strakes and a wide chine edge that extends virtually to the bows. The combo of wide chines and bow flare helps to deflect spray and make the Seasport a pretty dry riding craft.

In the Freedom tradition hull weight is not overly heavy, however the boat is still structurally substantial and among other things features a 17mm hardwood ply floor, fibreglass both sides for strength and water-tightness.

With hull weight at 900kg, trail weight is about 1850-1900kg or just below the level where you need hydraulic over-ride brakes. This puts the Seasport comfortably within the range of mid-size four-wheel drives like the Pajero, Jeep Cherokee and even the Nissan X-Trail.

**Performance:** Conditions were looking a bit ominous in the south as we took the new Seasport for a spin on the Gold Coast Broadwater. Little

did we know that the 'rain storm' sweeping towards was to become one of the worst hailstorms to hit the Gold Coast in recent years.

Aware that something was on the way we proceeded to get our photo session done before it got nasty. After all, getting wet is something you have to accept when you're a boat tester!

In the process of photographing it was easy to see how well the Seasport slipped onto the plane and rode with a low, clean bow wash. It was by the far the driest of the three boats we were testing at the time.

As I stepped aboard the Seasport the storm was almost upon us so I ran the boat north looking for a bay for shelter. However, the storm soon overran us with not just driving rain, but hail stones like golf balls.

The Broadwater soon looked like a mini Bass Strait with 40-knot winds,





steep waves and a whiteout of hail. However, in this liquid mess the Seasport handled beautifully, sitting nicely at speed and not once falling off track.

Soon it became obvious we'd have to slow down because the hail was bouncing dangerously into the helm station. With the motor just ticking over we literally hove-to in the Broadwater. Shades of Bass Strait again, but a lot warmer and pleasingly, no leaks in the cabin.

It was also great to find the Freedom is 'hail proof.' While it didn't suffer the slightest scratch, or mark I couldn't say the same for the cars we found back at the ramp. They were pitted with extensive hail damage!

This rather dramatic test session certainly was a great advertisement for the Seasport. In quite nasty conditions it rode well, and most importantly was always easy to steer and keep on track.

I also liked the very comfortable helm position with well-padded bucket seats, moulded footrests and easy-to-view curved instrument dash.

High at-rest stability is also another strong selling point of this Noosa-bred boat, while the stepped transom with foldaway ladder makes it easy to board from the stern.

**Power:** We used the maximum recommended power of a 200hp, however the results on the water



suggest the Seasport 6.4 could happily get by with a motor as small as 150 or 140hp. Most of the first boats have been sold with 140hp four-stroke motors and customers are very happy with the result.

Speed results with the 200hp HPDI Yamaha V-6 were as follows:

3500rpm	23 knots
4500rpm	31 knots
5500rpm	42 knots

This is obviously more than enough power and unless you either carried a big payload, or dabbled in a bit of water skiing it's not needed. Actually,

on the latter score the Seasport would be an excellent ski boat because the tunnel ensures good grip on the propeller at all times. Try as we might we just couldn't get the prop to cavitate in turns, or fast take-offs.

The Seasport also comes with a 175-litre in-floor fuel tank, rear deck filler and full instrumentation.

**Deck Layout:** Standard features of the Seasport include a moulded fibreglass bowsprit with bow roller and Tee bollard. The split stainless bow rail is another standard feature and feeds the anchor line automatically to the bow.



The cabin is taken virtually full-width so your only practical access to the anchor is via the big forehatch. However, it's disappointing the bunk arrangement doesn't allow you to stand below the hatch.

I'd like to also see some non-skid on the cabin room just in case some crew decide to climb aboard over the bows.

Moving aft you find a generous-sized dash to take any size sounder and good details like the passenger grab rails and recessed throttle for the helmsman.

The Seasport also has a cut-away cabin bulkhead so there's easy access, and very good light into the cabin. With comfortable cushions this could be a safe playpen for the kids. Alternatively the full-sized Vee berths with padded backrest makes the cab a great place for adults to enjoy lunch under cover.

The pedestal seats sit atop moulded seat boxes that could be used as tackle stowage lockers. Big side pockets also gobble up a lot of tackle, while the flat side decks make it easy to add extra rod holders.

Back aft there's an upholstered lounge that can seat three adults quite comfortable. This is a split base design so you can have one half, or the whole thing removed if you want more fishing space. At the same time there are large fibreglass stowage bins under the seats that could be used for fishing, or personal gear.

Other features of note include the recessed quarter cleats, navigation lights, separate anchor locker (bow) and non-feedback steering.

The options include a fibreglass targa arch with bimini, or an equally attractive stainless steel targa rod holder with bimini top. The latter also has a slide-out canopy for extra sun shelter.

**Summary:** Freedom's new Seasport model is sure to strike a cord with a number of potential boat buyers. Particularly those after an economical rig in the six-metre size range will like this new cabin boat.

Finish is quite good, if short of the refinements you get in the more up-market fibreglass boats that are also more expensive. In many ways this boat is gunning for the tinnies, rather than its own kind and could well carve out some market share from the metal fraternity.

It is very well priced, and in terms of weight it's not much different to an equivalent size tinnie.

While it's also somewhat short on fishing accessories you do get a pair of rod holders, plumbed live bait well and space to add a really decent-size sounder.

**tbf**

## BOAT TEST ANALYSIS

### Freedom 6.4 Seasport/Yamaha 200hp

Boat supplied with Yamaha 200hp HPDI V-6, dual-axle trailer, fibreglass targa, bimini, front clears, upholstered cabin cushions, rear folding ladder, navigation lights, stainless steel bow rails, two-tone hull, 27MHz radio and inshore safety gear. Same boat priced from \$46,990 with Johnson 140hp four-stroke from Blakes Marine, Sydney ph (02) 4577 6699.

#### SPECIFICATION CHART

Model	Freedom Seasport	SeaLegend 610	Mustang 2000	Haines Hunter650	Signature 630F
Construction	GRP	GRP	GRP	GRP	GRP
Configuration	cabin	w/around	cabin	cabin	cabin
Length overall	6.4m	6.3m	6.2m	6.7m	6.3m
Max. beam	2.4m	2.3m	2.3m	2.4m	2.5m
Deadrise	22°	23°	21°	21°	21°
Hull weight	900kg	1000kg	1000kg	1200kg	950kg
Weight on trailer	1850kg	1830kg	1830kg	2200kg	1860kg
Rated max. power	200hp	175hp	200hp	230hp	225hp
Power as tested	Yamaha200	Ficht175	Johnson140	Yamaha225	Suzuki200
Fuel capacity	175L	170L	185L	210L	200L

#### STAR RATING

Finish	★★★★	Helm Set-up	★★★★
Fitout	★★★★	Fishability	★★★★
Ride	★★★★	Safety Features	★★★
Dryness	★★★★	Value for Money	★★★★
Handling	★★★★		

\*Data ESTIMATED by the TBF team when accurate information is unavailable. Maximum star rating 5 stars.