

trailerboat fisherman

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specials

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Baysport 545 Sports Cuddy
Polycraft 410 Challenger
Bar Crusher 535SC Side Console
Yellowfin 6200 Dual Pod
Fi Glass 530 Firestar

Those of us who like the look of fibreglass boats will find favour with this new mid-sized sports cuddy that suits family cruising or fishing. Test report JAMES HILL, photos by Baitbox.



Baysport 545 Sports

Queensland-based Baysport is one fibreglass brand that's not afraid to take on tinnies in the entry-level market. Its range of fibreglass cuddies competes on an equal footing with tinnies and without resorting to poverty packs.

Previously, Baysport has done well with the 575 and 620 models but recently it's produced the Baysport 545 Sports Cuddy that should appeal to an even bigger market.

Make no mistake, this is going to be an even bigger winner for the Queensland builder. This mid-sized cuddy combines smart, modern styling and excellent value for money.

The Baysport is big enough for both family days on the water, and that offshore fishing trip with your mates. It has plenty of cockpit space and sells for a tempting price of under \$40K.

Our test boat from Sydney dealer, Blakes Marine, costs \$36,990 including a quality single-axle trailer and Evinrude 90hp ETEC outboard. That's terrific buying especially when

you consider it has a clean-tech motor, braked trailer, folding bimini, rod holders, rear swim ladder, Garmin colour sounder and hydraulic steering.

Many fishos should consider this boat even if they traditionally lean toward alloy boats. That's because the Baysport has a comfortable cabin to dump your gear in and a deep Vee hull that really does deliver a really good ride.

You might think fibreglass isn't as knock-about as alloy but in fact it's quite robust and several layers of laminate fibreglass ensure it can take heavy impacts without fuss.

Fibreglass also holds up well over time – it doesn't suffer from electrolysis problems and if you keep it protected from the sun's UV rays, it will stay looking good for decades.

Design: The new Baysport is a modern, Vee bottom design with a strong emphasis on fuel efficiency through an innovative bottom design. It is also a roomy craft that incorporates

lots of modern features like a moulded bowsprit for the anchor.

The length overall is 5.45m with a generous 2.3m beam and deep 21-degree bottom that ensures the ride is quite comfortable in choppy water, or when fishing offshore.

The overall styling is bang up-to-date and includes a nicely curved aerodynamic cabin and curved windscreen. There's also a fastback Porto Fino transom incorporating a large landing step.

However, the real outstanding feature of the Baysport 545 is the small 'tunnel' running down the keel line. This is an innovative feature of Baysport boats and ensures they come to the plane more quickly and produce less water drag.

Combined with small down-deflection chine edges, this tunnel gets more water flow around the motor blades at all times. The tunnel turbocharges the craft onto the plane quicker and there's less fiddling with motor trim. It also makes the boat track better (hold



Cuddy

course) and turn faster and in a more controlled manner.

The above feature makes the Baysport 545 a much more user-friendly craft to drive and is really ideal to teach the kids boat driving.

Potential buyers will also be pleased to know these boats come with a modern, moulded fibreglass stringer system. That means no timber to go soggy, plus the stringers are foam-filled to add strength and make for a much quieter ride.

Utilising other modern fibreglass construction techniques means the Baysport 545 is no heavier than an equivalent alloy boat yet manages to offer a better ride because of the superior deep Vee bottom.

And there's no worry about the structural integrity – the Baysport comes with a seven-year hull warranty, proving the factory really stands behind the product.

Coming aboard is made easy by a folding, stainless steel ladder on the stern deck. There's no transom door,



however, it's fairly easy to step into the cockpit over the rear lounge.

The total trail weight is 1200kg, which means the Baysport is very easy to tow behind mid-sized cars like the V-6 Aurion, or SUVs like the Subaru Forrester. The Aurion has a tow capacity limit of 1600kg, while the Subaru has a 1400kg tow limit. It goes without saying the Baysport is fairly easy to park, or garage at home because it's not overly massive.

Performance: It was a lovely sunny morning the day we joined Alan Blake for a spin on Pittwater. There wasn't a lot of bump in the water, however, we found enough luxury cruiser washes to test out the new Gen 4 tunnel design.

First off, I jumped aboard while we launched the boat in the water from its single-axle multi-roller trailer. Then I fired up the clean tech Evinrude 90hp motor that kicked first go and didn't choke us with any smoke. Frankly, you'll never go back to old carburettor two-strokes once you've experienced these new clean tech motors!

After picking Alan up from the wharf we quietly slipped out through the moorings, enjoying the view and discussing this new design.

What you notice straight away is the roominess of the cockpit and the big lounge that can seat three adults easily.

You also get two very comfortable bucket seats that make it very comfortable for the driver and first mate.

Once clear of the eight-knot zone I opened up the throttle and got the Baysport 545 flying over the silver waters of Pittwater. And here the tunnel design worked its magic. The boat slipped into full plane mode with little effort and hardly much bow lift. It was an impressive effort and shows how these boats must save a lot of fuel because they're so efficient through the water.

And once up and running the Baysport glided along very nicely without any need to fiddle with the trim button. The boat also seems to cut through wave chop easily and we went through fast turns without any hint of propeller cavitations.

This was an impressive performance all round and especially so given the hull is no heavier than a tinnie yet rides so gently.

I found the helm position to be very comfortable, especially seated in the hip-hugging bucket seats that gave excellent body support.

The more upright, curved windscreen gives very good vision and helps to reduce sun reflection. Another benefit is the windscreen slope better match's overhead clears and a bimini. It's a small thing, but just helps to

make these boats look and feel better on the water.

The steering wheel is set low on the modern, curved dashboard so it falls nicely to hand in either a sitting or standing position.

At-rest stability is another area where the Baysport scores well. It's a fairly wide craft and this also makes it a fairly stable craft for fishing.

Power: The new Baysport is rated for single outboards 90-130hp in either two, or four-stroke format. We tested the boat with the minimum recommended power level of 90hp so were asking a lot of the boat. The Evinrude 90hp ETEC is an in-line, three-cylinder motor that pumps out 1295cc of power, which actually did quite well as the following GPS figures reveal:

3500rpm	18 knots
4500rpm	25 knots
5500rpm	30 knots





These speeds would be quite sufficient if you just fished around the bay and weren't going to carry a huge pay-load. However, if you were to do some distance offshore or hold the family reunion, let me suggest you go for either an 115hp or 130hp motor.

My guess is the 115hp size motor would be ideal for all-round use. I wouldn't think the 130hp necessary unless you were going to tow the teenage lads on skis.

Motor choices really get down to personal choices and these days I believe most of us are not ranging too far in either our cars, or our boats. We're more sensitive to fuel prices so in many cases buyers will be happy to go for the 90hp Evinrude ETEC and keep the running cost low.

The boat comes standard with a 120-litre fuel tank and that should give extensive cruising range with the 90hp size motor. In most cases you'll get two full days out of the tank without needing a refuel. And yes, she comes standard with a deck filler, fuel gauge and water separator in the fuel line.

Deck layout: A key feature why these boats work so well is the sports cuddy design. The cuddy stretches out to the gunwales, thereby maximising cabin space below and making it easier to sit and rest below.

I like this design because it makes the most of the available space and gives you plenty of elbow room at the helm. At the bows you get all the goodies you need for coastal fishing including moulded bowsprit, articulated

bow roller, Tee bollard and split stainless bow rail.

The dual bow roller makes it easy to retrieve and there's an anchor locker and large fore-hatch from which you can attend to the anchor. My only criticism is the anchor locker doesn't have a lock-down latch – it should!

The wide cabin has two full-length Vee sleeping berths, comfortable backrests and cover over the instrument panel. You don't have side decks but they're really not necessary when you can handle the anchor from the cabin.

Moving to the dash area we find a scooped instrument panel with plenty of space for the motor gauges and flush-mounted sounder/plotter. Also

fitted was a flush-fitted throttle box, a bank of water-proof switches and Garmin colour Fishfinder (sounder).

You also get stowage spaces in under the moulded seat boxes. The latter could be converted to tackle boxes without too much effort.

Big raised side pockets provide plenty of room for fishing gear and back aft there's the lounge with decent seat width and backrest.

The cockpit also gives you a nice 72cm internal depth for safe fishing offshore. There's plenty of room to move especially if you remove the lounge. I might mention there are useful large stowage boxes under the lounge. These could be left aboard to use as fish boxes.





The cockpit isn't self-draining, however, you have a sump to drain water to an electric bilge pump. You get this plus two rod holders and factory-fitted navigation lights and compass in the standard boat.

Other standout features of the new Baysport include recessed stern mooring cleats, Euro-style stern grab handles and choice of attractive coloured topsides.

Verdict: Baysport has hit the mark again with this new 5.45m sport cuddy. It's not just that it's a keenly priced boat, but also a nice looking craft with enough standard items to ensure you can go boating and fishing from the word go. I think buyers will appreciate the fact they're getting features like hydraulic steering, curved windscreens and comfortable rear lounge all within the standard price.

Possibly, some buyers might want to upgrade to a 115hp size motor, in which case you will need to add another \$3,070 to the price with an ETEC. But I think many will stay with the 90hp motor and keep the money in their pocket.

Certainly, you should add a few extras like a VHF radio and front and side cleats. However, that only adds an extra \$1,000 to the price and still keeps the total package on the low side of forty grand.

It's interesting to note most people like to stay within the same price point when buying a new car, or SUV.

So perhaps boats and cars maybe share a similar 'value parity' in our minds more than we realise. Or is that just male thinking?

tbf

BOAT TEST ANALYSIS

Boat supplied with Evinrude 90hp E TEC, single-axle braked rolla-trailer, navigation lights, bilge pump, compass, bimini canopy, rear bench seat, hydraulic steering, transom ladder, Garmin colour sounder, cabin cushions, inshore safety pack, colour topsides. Price \$36,990 Blakes Marine, NSW ph 02 4577 6699.

SPECIFICATION CHART

	Baysport	HainesHunter	Signature	Streaker	Huntsman
Brand	Baysport	HainesHunter	Signature	Streaker	Huntsman
Model	545 SportCuddy	525 Profish	540F	545T	5.5 Dorado
Material	fibreglass	fibreglass	fibreglass	fibreglass	fibreglass
Style	cuddy	cuddy	cuddy	cuddy	cuddy
Length	5.4m	5.3m	5.3m	5.4m	5.5m
Beam	2.3m	2.1m	2.1m	2.4m	2.1m
Rated power	130hp	130hp	140hp	150hp	150hp
Power as tested	Evinrude90	Evinrude90	Suzuki115	Yamaha130	Evinrude115
Hull weight	650kg	680kg	560kg	790kg	590kg
Fuel capacity	120L	120L	100L	135L	70L

STAR RATING

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

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



The clear choice in boating

Baysport 620 Offshore

...nothing comes close



This attractive range of fibreglass boats combines practical virtues with plenty of cockpit space and strong fishing orientation. The new 620 Offshore will please the most ardent angler as well as the family with its comfortable interior and space.



For more information and the location of your nearest dealers www.baysportsboats.com.au