

Are you tough enough?

Mac boats are built tough without compromising on looks. We gave the Mac Daddy of the Mac fleet – the 600 Sport – a thorough work-out in testing conditions.



Words and images by Matthew Jones



It was back in 1986 that the very first Mac boat, a 2.1m plastic dinghy, was launched in Tauranga. Gary MacDougall (Mac) was delighted his initial design was a success, selling well nationally and with growing exports to Japan, Canada, USA, and Australia. Building on this success, the first 5.7m Mac pontoon boat was launched two years later, with this design being the basis for the hulls in production today.

Fast-forward 25 years and Mac boats are now manufactured in East Tamaki by Galloway International. Led by managing director Garth Galloway, it produces a wide range of models from 2.1m to 5.75m in overall length. All Mac boats are built from marine grade polyethylene to CE, US Coastguard and MSA survey standards.

Why polyethylene?

Polyethylene is the world's most widely used plastic. It is the material common plastic bags are made from...but plastic bags are weak and break easily – the opposite of a Mac boat.

Polyethylene is positively buoyant (unlike aluminium or fibreglass) and lightweight, and when manufactured into a "double walled" one-piece hull it's very strong. So strong, in fact, it's said to be five times stronger than fibreglass. Polyethylene needs no painting and absorbs most knocks, greatly reducing maintenance costs and allowing for more time on the water.

While forgetting to put the bung in is embarrassing it's not a dire situation on a Mac boat. The positively buoyant polyethylene and the closed-cell polyurethane foam used in the internal cavities of the hull provide plenty of flotation on their own, giving you plenty of time to rectify the situation and carry on your way.

First impressions

Garth kindly handed over the keys to his personal boat for me to play with, and after hooking it up I headed to Half Moon Bay Marina on a windy afternoon to get it wet.

A thorough inspection prior to departing the boat ramp found the finish quality of the polyethylene to be of a surprisingly high standard – if not quite as glossy as a paint job. There is only one weld in the entire hull construction, between the cabin top and the hull, and it's a very tidy one indeed. There are no sharp edges in sight and the profile of the boat is quite sporty – like the name suggests.

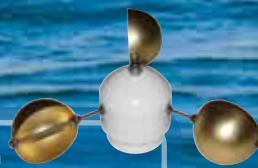
On board

Mac boats offer a wide range of customisation and the test boat is up the upper end of the



Weather conditions

Average windspeed SE 20-30 knots
Sea state Moderate





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Plenty of seating, adequate hand-holds and good storage

spectrum – as you would expect when it's the boss's private toy.

It was good to see a quality anchoring package bolted to the bow. A solid fairlead feeds a Quick freefall windlass, which fits nicely into the space available. Access is via a large front hatch and there is a second cleat in front of the windscreen as a back-up that can be accessed from the helm station. With this sized anchoring equipment I don't think there's any excuse for a dragging – a good thing in my opinion.

Up front there is a large storage area with a self-draining recess in which to stow gear securely. A stainless steel grab rail also provides a little extra leverage when conditions are a bit trying.

The helm station

The dash has a practical layout, with Suzuki gauges in place for monitoring fuel consumption, rpm, speed through the water, and trim. The switches are neatly positioned



The helm does not have frills but it works

on either side of the steering wheel with the VHF tucked underneath in easy reach. Trim tabs aren't usually required on inherently stable pontoon boats, but this Mac 600 has them anyway.

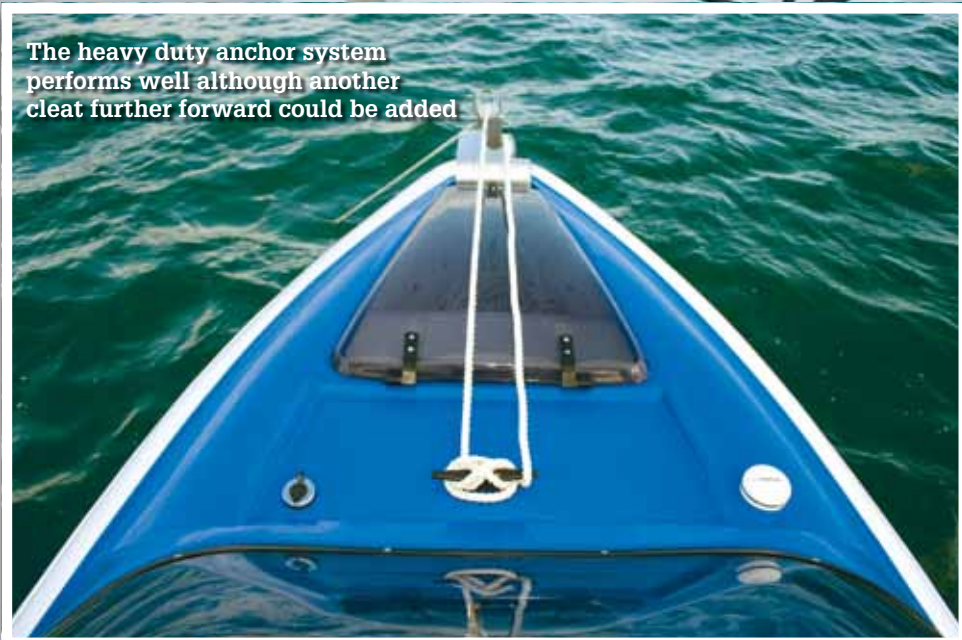
The back-to-back seating is comfortable and

provides plenty of dry under-seat storage but is non-adjustable. At just a shade over six foot I felt cramped seated at the helm, with my knees touching the dash. This was further exaggerated by a combination of the low bimini top and the windscreen surround being right at eye level, which obscured my

Ask anyone that has owned a Mac boat and they'll tell you just how tough, safe and stable they are..." **Trade A Boat says...**



The ski-pole/bait-board is a sensible use of space and adds versatility



The heavy duty anchor system performs well although another cleat further forward could be added

vision somewhat when seated. I felt more comfortable driving standing up. The team at Galloway have acknowledged this issue and are taking steps to rectify it.

Optional side pockets provide excellent rod storage and the two rear seats feature a

couple of rod holders as well. Under-floor storage is also built into the hull and looks big enough to take a couple of scuba tanks on each side. The battery, fuel primer and bilge pump are neatly hidden away inside a lift-up box located between the rear seats.

TRADEABOAT

MAC 600 SPORT

Fishability	★ ★ ★ ★ ↓
Ride	★ ★ ★ ★ ↓
Stability	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Finish	★ ★ ★ ★ ↓
Versatility	★ ★ ★ ★
Ease of towing	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ↓
Wow factor	★ ★ ★ ★ ↓

A solid stainless steel ski-pole that doubles as a bait-board holder is a good addition in terms of versatility. Grab handles and moulded steps lead down the transom, providing easy access to the water and making for a good seat to dangle your feet from on a hot summer's day.

The polyethylene floor has a non-skid pattern moulded into it. It's easy to clean but can get slippery when wet. Carpet or tube-floor matting can be supplied and should be considered by all buyers.

Performance

Once clear of the five-knot markers, and with a calm patch of water ahead, I put the hammer down to see what she could

do and topped out at 40mph riding solo. Unfortunately that speed test was short-lived and as I approached the channel and became exposed to weather I was forced to ease back to 3500rpm and a comfortable cruising speed of 20mph.

With the wind against tide effect in full force, a sharp metre-high chop forced a further easing of the throttle to around 15mph to avoid getting airborne – not that the boat cared either way.

This test boat has been set-up for bare-foot skiing and is deliberately overpowered in order to provide better hole shot performance. The fact that it can handle the extra power and weight is testament to the strength of these hulls. The downside is that it is slightly backside-heavy and falls off the plane under 15mph. This comment should be treated in the context of the observation and the same boat set-up according to the specifications would not suffer the same problem. It should also be noted that no-one in their right mind would be waterskiing on a day like this anyway.

Over-powered or not, this Mac 600 Sport took all the inclement weather and our test driver's heavy foot could deliver and just laughed. The landings were soft, and due to the sound-absorbing properties of the polyethylene and the polyurethane foam, whisper quiet. Couple that with the smooth, quiet Suzuki four-stroke and you have a peaceful boating experience indeed – well, about as peaceful as you can get in a power boat.

As far as stability goes this boat was rock solid with very little movement at rest or underway.



- Quiet and soft ride
- Low maintenance
- Excellent stability
- Virtually indestructible
- Unsinkable



- Quite wet in the rough
- Helm set-up was cramped

Launching and retrieving

Mac boats are supplied on a purpose-built single-axle trailer with polyethylene skids. While a lower maintenance option than a fully rolled set-up, it did take quite a bit of effort to push her off. Further effort was required at retrieval time due to the single-handed winch set-up, but the skids guided the boat on perfectly.

Being lightweight, this rig was a breeze to tow with a modest family wagon, even through the afternoon rush-hour traffic.

The verdict

If you're looking for low maintenance, low cost and low hassle boating without having to compromise on looks, then one of these might be just the ticket. Ask anyone that has had a Mac boat and they'll tell you just how tough, safe and stable they are. Coastguard obviously agrees as it uses Mac boats as its training vessels... ↓



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	5.75m
External beam	2.2m
Internal beam	1.80m
Deadrise	18 degrees
Hull weight	635kg
Freeboard	650mm
Capacity	8 persons
Fuel	90-litre under-floor tank
Engine	140hp Suzuki four-stroke (rated 90-120hp)
Basic packages priced from	\$39,995

Price from **NZ\$39,995**