



SPORTSMAN 19 REEF

Words & Images: Kosta Linardos

Aesthetically it's a beautiful-looking boat; its sleek lines and that big Carolina flare look amazing both on and off the water. The interior offers two large port and starboard hatches – the starboard side comes plumbed as standard, but you could plumb both. In between these hatches (in front of the engine well) are four rod holders. The console helm offers enough room for gauges, a 10in electronics unit and you could fit a 12in or bigger on top of the console if you are prepared to sacrifice the cup holders. I did find the console to be too short and I had to bend over to drive. I'm 6ft 3in, so shorter people may not notice as much, but as far as consoles go it's on the shorter side.

There are three vertical rod holders on each side of the console, giving the 19 a total of 10 rod holders. If you were travelling on a long trip or you wanted to fit a storm cover, there isn't anywhere to store rods horizontally (there are no side pockets or storage of any kind) so you'll have to get creative. Sportsman

does offer Sea Suckers as an option, which use suction caps to hold rod storage on the side of the liner. This also means there isn't anywhere to tuck your toes under when fighting a fish which could be challenging offshore in rough seas.

The bow offers a large casting platform that encompasses a large storage hatch and anchor locker. There is room to fit a bow-mounted sounder in varying positions, and you can easily fit large electric motors up on the bow. It's a great sportfishing platform that can cover everything from lakes and estuaries to offshore.

The day of testing had been blowing 20 knots from the northwest and had backed off to 10, providing light waves and some slop to get a good feel for how the hull would handle less desirable conditions. The Island Reef is fitted with a 200-litre fuel tank and on the day of testing, the tank had 70 litres in it. This model was fitted with a 130hp Yamaha and an alloy

prop. The 19 is available with a 115, 130 and 150. The 130 provided excellent hole shot and getting out into the sloppy conditions showed the 16-degree deadrise and aggressive entry to provide a very soft ride going into it. The big Carolina flare deflected water very well and as far as centre consoles go, it can be considered "dry". I managed to get speeds of 67km/h quite easily at WOT and I'm sure with the addition of a stainless prop and some adjustments you could achieve more.

It was also capable and sure in a following sea, even at high speed. It's certainly a very fun boat to drive and its handling with sharp cornering – even within the slop and small waves – was outstanding. As tested with a dual-axle Savage Trailer A series (aluminium) and 130hp Yamaha. It's a great-looking boat that covers a lot of bases and provides good ride and handling. If you're in the market for quality fibre glass centre console, there isn't a lot in this price bracket that can compete.