



Persuaded

Scott Amon runs through the thought process of purchasing a new big boat and introduces the latest *Black Dog*.

WORDS + PICS BY SCOTT AMON

MY SOUTHWIND UB580 served me well for six years. It was a versatile boat as much at home on the bluewater as it was gliding the upper reaches of a north coast river system. It was also economical to run; a 70 hp Yamaha pushed it along with little effort. However, being a centre console, it offered little protection from the elements. The time had come for a few creature comforts—especially for offshore work.

My life is busy. There's the kids who aren't far off their teens, writing commitments, a position within Lowrance Australia and the running of the farm. My enthusiasm for fishing has never waned, but the entire rigmarole of readying, launching and retrieving, and then cleaning up and storing trailer-boats, doesn't make for a quick fishing trip.

When the *Modern Fishing* Trophy workboats came up to visit, I had a taste of the conveniences of keeping a boat on a marina berth. It was a dream just throwing a fish box, tackle box and armful of rods into the car, loading the boat and then simply turning the key and heading out for a session. I figured while it might cost a couple of grand a year to keep a boat on the marina, I'd definitely fish more. And the more I fish, the more value I get out of my investment, and the more fishing articles I was likely to generate.

I started looking at 6-7 m trailerboats with a lockable cabin that were suited to being left on the water. I was undecided whether outboard powered vessels would be suitable, so I started looking for the right hull, figuring powering questions would be answered along the way.

I wanted the boat to be reasonably economical. With fuel prices skyrocketing, I didn't want to be paying the servicing and fuel costs of running huge twin outboards.

I spent weeks flicking through the pages of boating magazines for both new and used vessels. I never realised there were so many boats on the market. It was frustrating and confusing. There didn't seem to be a boat suited to my requirements. Many came close, but there was always something that signalled the boat wasn't quite right.

The cockpit has a spacious layout perfect for fishing offshore grounds.



The kids have been catching plenty...even before leaving the marina!



Snapper have been the main target for the new *Black Dog*.



I liked some of the European styled, enclosed wheelhouse 20-odd footers, but on closer inspection, the layout, build quality and other factors didn't suit me. I'm pretty fussy and a great believer that when you come across the right boat, you get a strong gut feeling right away.

The search continued until I flicked through a magazine and saw a 22 footer (6.95 m) with a fully lockable wheelhouse, totally uncluttered cockpit and smart looking lines. Visually, it was the boat of my dreams. It looked spot-on in every respect, and the advertisement stated it was available in a number of engine options. It was the Persuader 2200 Offshore, built by Steber and Sons on the NSW Central Coast. Something told me this was it, but could I afford it?

Before chasing more information, I ran it past a few mates. Glen Booth (ex *Modern Fishing* editor) has seen and fished on plenty of boats and he was also taken by its practical lines and layout. Everyone who laid eyes on it was complimentary. It was nice to have my first impressions shared by other serious boating anglers.

I followed up with plenty of homework on the boat, including visiting the factory and tormenting John Steber and his hard-working family with many questions. The closer I looked and the more I learned about this boat, the more convinced I became that it was exactly what I was after. The build quality was superb and the options of diesel, petrol stern-drive or shaft-drive diesel allowed for some interesting choices.

Having never owned an in-board powered boat, I did a fair amount of homework on reliability, economy and maintenance requirements of the 125 hp turbocharged Yanmar diesel engine and

associated gearbox and shaft drive components. The consensus from both commercial and recreational in-board gurus left no question that the Yanmar power plant was an exceptional engine. Yanmar engines are renowned for their superb ruggedness, corrosion resistance and long engine life. They offer excellent performance and are simple and economical (250 hour service intervals) to maintain.

My aim was to leave the boat on the water at Coffs Harbour Marina, so the diesel shaft-drive appealed the most and I opted for it. I was surprised and impressed to learn the Persuader was legally trailerable. I didn't require a trailer at this stage, but it's good to know it could be used as a trailer-boat.

First impressions

John and Ben Steber arrived at the farm gate with my brand new Persuader 2200 Offshore a day before the Easter break. It looked great and the personalised registration, BLKDOG(N), brought back happy memories (long time *Modern Fishing* readers will be aware of my pledge to name all of my boats after a particularly faithful black dog. This was my biggest *Black Dog* yet!).

The company had a spare trailer and had towed it up specially so I could fish the Coffs Easter Classic Fishing Competition. We dropped it in the drink, the Steber fellas ran through operational procedures and then we parked the good dog in its cosy marina berth—or should that be kennel?

The Steber boys then left me to discover the boat. It was a full-on afternoon stowing safety and other gear onboard in readiness for the next

The Persuader 2200 is legally trailerable around Australia.



fishing
PRO TIPS

BUYING A BOAT?

morning. It was the first time I've had a boat that, after my truckload of gear had been loaded, still had empty storage compartments. I spent the afternoon getting acquainted with the general layout and gadgetry.

It doesn't matter how much homework you do on a boat prior to purchase, you rarely get a real insight into the workings, layout and nooks and crannies. This was my chance to check things out and I was impressed. The spaciousness of the wheelhouse and cockpit and uncluttered layout pleased me. It felt right. The engine compartment was tidy with easy access to all important maintenance components. I was busting to get out and put the boat to its first test.

My young son Coen and I poked out for our first offshore run in the boat the next morning. We filled the live bait tank with slimy mackerel and pointed the bow north to our mackerel grounds on a pretty comfortable ocean. I quickly fell in love with the drone of the Yanmar diesel.

- Have a clear picture of the boat you need before scouring the pages of boating magazines and trudging through boat sales yards.
- Be mindful of fuel and ongoing maintenance costs of any boat that interests you.
- If you're looking at larger trailerboats, consider the benefits of a marina/mooring.
- Consider the benefits of a diesel engine over a petrol engine.
- Consider what style and type of vessel might increase the chance of your entire family becoming more involved with your boating and/or fishing.

AMON'S OPTIONS

The Persuader 2200 Offshore comes with an array of standard features including all navigation, cockpit and cabin lighting, dual batteries and isolation switch, manual and electric bilge pump, all necessary gauges (incl. fuel), 22-litre hot water service, compass, trim tabs, numerous hand and grab rails, transom door, marlin board (swim platform), pressurised hot/cold cockpit shower, full bulkheads, fabric covered forward berths and V-berth insert, sliding helmsman and passenger seating, fold-away transom seating, numerous underfloor storage/kill tanks, cockpit sink with tap, copious cabin storage, Sanniepottie toilet, slide-away metho stove, under-seat icebox, cupboard and many other intelligent and useful standard features not seen as standard in most boats.

Due to the comprehensive list of standard features, my list of additional options was relatively small. I chose the 125 hp Yanmar engine in shaft drive, six overhead rocket launchers (rod storage) with dual flood lights, extra fuel tank to take my total storage to 150 l, cabin and cockpit carpet, live bait tank, full length cockpit rails, 27 meg radio, antifoul and fitment of owner-supplied sonar/GPS. (I work for Lowrance, so understandably I fitted their gear.)

I opted for an LCX 25C combination sonar/GPS/chartplotter and an Eagle SeaChamp 2000C DF combo unit. I also had fitted a 1 kilowatt shoot-through-hull transducer mounted in a wet box. I tend to run the Lowrance unit as sounder and the Eagle as a chartplotter, but either unit can run as a combo sonar/GPS.

THE BOAT

Weight: Fully laden, 1,800 kg.

Price: Starts at around \$80,000 with a host of extras, very competitive with similar sized conventional trailerboats.

Length: 22 ft and legally trailerable throughout Australia.

Bonuses: It can be factory customised and the same hull is available in a live-aboard style cruiser.

More info: Amon was so impressed by this vessel he has taken up the NSW North Coast agency for it. For more information on the Persuader 2200 Offshore, call Dogtooth Fishing Traders: 0417 442 487.



Coen and I christened the new *Black Dog* with a few spotties.

The engine box was well soundproofed and, while noise levels were lower than I expected, that metallic whine of a turbo diesel winding up was heart-warming.

We cruised up the coast in comfort at about 17 knots and the beefy hull felt more solid and sure-footed than any trailerboat I've owned. The fishing was a little slower than expected, but we still christened the boat with a couple of chunky spotted mackerel and hard-pulling mackerel tuna.

Lasting impressions

I've now had the boat for more than three months and clocked up over 70 hours. On other boats I've owned, this has been enough time to discover any issues or shortfalls. But the new *Black Dog* is different. Instead of inadequacies, I've found more strengths and benefits in this vessel.

The shaft drive offers huge benefits over outboard powered boats. Instead of a transom with an engine well and one or two large outboards restricting access to the water directly behind the boat, a fish can be netted or gaffed right at the

transom—with or without transom door access. My live bait tank is fitted to the port side of the marlin board, but Steber and Sons are looking at the possibility of turning the transom door into a live bait tank—or at least making it an option.

I love running a diesel engine in a boat. I feel they're made for marine use and better suited to the task than petrol engines. The Yanmar has performed faultlessly and offers superb fuel economy based on similar usage of my old boat. This 22 footer uses less fuel than my older, economical longboat hull and 70 hp two-stroke outboard. I did five fishing trips for 46 litres of fuel. With fuel prices skyrocketing, I'm glad I'm not running a large outboard, or worse, twin outboards. A day's fishing in those boats could equate to half a week's wages!

Leaving my boat on a marina has rekindled my offshore fishing enthusiasm. I'm fishing more and it's easier and quicker. My entire family utilise the boat more than any other I've owned. We head down to it after school, on weekends and whenever we get a chance. We don't even have to take it out. Lounging around on it at the marina is just as relaxing. The kids caught seven species of fish off the boat at the marina in one day. It's like having a holiday house! Plus, I can buy a trailer for it and tow it away to some far-flung destination any time I want.

You get the picture—I'm besotted by the thing. And I'm getting my money's worth because we use it so much. You'll see a lot more of this boat in future articles in *Modern Fishing*, and at a later date I'll give a more detailed account of the boat's fishing potential, fuel and performance statistics. Until then, if you're looking for me, I'll be out on the water training the new *Black Dog* to catch fish, confident in the knowledge that for my requirements, the Persuader 2200 Offshore is as good as it gets!



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The cabin and wheelhouse are spacious and weatherproof.

