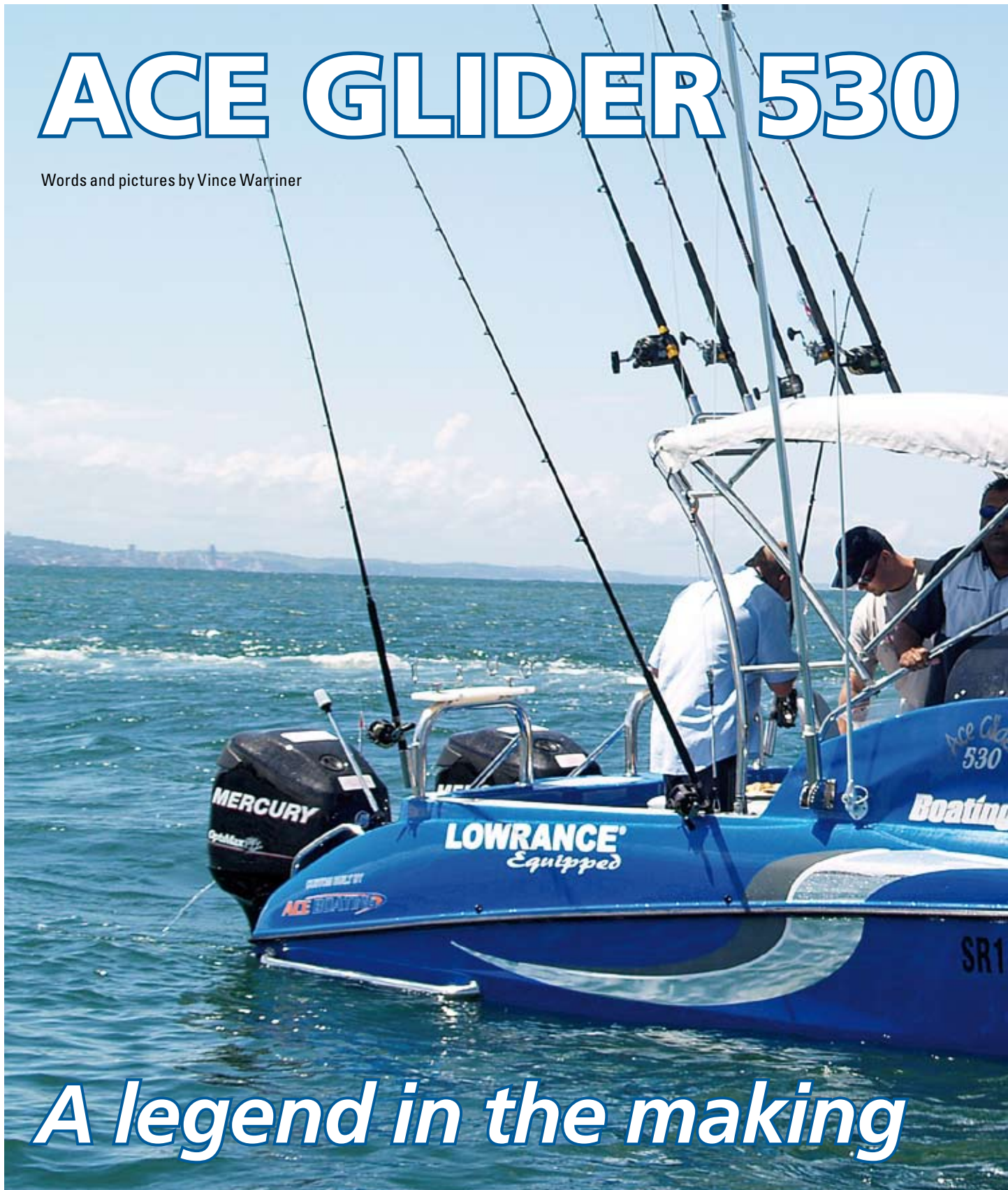


ACE GLIDER 530

Words and pictures by Vince Warriner



A legend in the making

Nothing breeds success like success! Since Ace Boating first developed their original Ace Glider two years ago it has made steady inroads into the ski boat and general fishing market. Dean Levy of Boating International in Edenvale felt the need for a new demonstrator boat and commissioned the factory to build one, but with a few improvements and power options.

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With an array of fishing rods out and the canopy up, this 5.3 m vessel looks like a mini battleship ready to do war with the fish.

So the scene was set recently at Natal Rod and Reel Club where we had a total of three boats to review. The other two (Sunsport 1950 Trio) appeared in the March issue and the Sunsport 2250 in the April issue of *Leisure Boating*. A re-launch of the 530 Ace Glider after testing, would make its debut at the Johannesburg Easter Show.

Conditions for test

Arriving at lunchtime I was filled with some concern as to what the offshore conditions would be like. The north-easter wind was picking up but luckily it was a sunny afternoon with scattered clouds, so the pictures to be taken would look good. The wind was up to six knots and created a choppy off-shore sea, which would prove a good test of this boat's character.

General impression

Among the other boats already in the water, the 530 Ace Glider truly stood out, resplendent in a striking strong blue colour and with all her fishing rods out

and canopy up, she looked like a mini battleship ready to do war with the fish!

Deck layout and standard features

This now-proven catamaran poly foam-filled hull is 100% wood free. The transom is made from imported COOSA material instead of marine ply. All bulkheads are fibreglass and the deck is non-slip, with a lovely pattern that also features on the gunnels. The total weight of the bare boat is 920 kg.

The stainless steel is of a very high-quality finish. The bow rail, windscreen and screen rail, centre door and screen, open to access a unique bow area. Two very comfortable seats sit in place of usually wasted deck space and they are not cramped – and neither is the bow area. What a place from which to fish!

A stainless, removable pilot seat is located opposite a rather unique padded seat, built into and along the console. Next to the seat is a washbasin with tap, and below is fitted a built-in 24-litre Bauer bar fridge.

A deluxe steering wheel is both attractive and practical, fitted to a Sea Star Hydraulic steering system.

Sea and rainwater drained well off the deck down channels running front to aft. No water can get into the fuel hatches on either side of a raised padded coffin hatch. This can be reversed depending on owner's preference and the fuel can go into the coffin hatch. A fighting chair gimble can be fitted to the raised hatch to take on the bigger game fish such as Cuda, Wahoo or Sailfish.

A stainless steel set of bump rails are found on either side, toward the rear of the boat. They are extremely functional for either hold on, swimming, or to keep the boat in position if surf launching.

Two roll bars have two trawling boards with four rod holders on top. Four rod holders are also fitted into the gunnels. Drink holders are well positioned both up front and rear. A fold-out stainless steel ladder at the transom makes getting in and out of the water so much easier.

The whole stainless steel structure, which folds down for the canopy, is certainly eye catching – but a bit of

a fight to put up on one's own. A bit of ingenuity is needed to improve the difficult-to-finger-tighten locking bolts. A wing nut system might have been a better fitment. This canopy's stainless rail also has a number of rocket launchers across the top. With all the fishing rods in position in the holders, the boat looks like the mean fishing machine she is!

There is ample storage for clothing, safety equipment, spare fuel, etc. There is space too to house lures and tackle in the port console.

A large live-bait well with walkover step is found in the rear. The step could be changed into a bait board, if need be.

Electronics

The well designed console has an array of instruments – enough to keep any skipper informed. These include two trim gauges, two rev counters, compass, 29 mg and VHF radio and mikes, switch panel which provides for exterior and interior lighting, a Lowrance depth finder LCX-27 including GPS, Sony sound system




A fully-kitted console with instrumentation like trim gauges, rev counters and GPS, puts a wealth of information at the skipper's fingertips.

and MP3 player/CD complete with iPod connection.

Motors and controls

The purpose of this new demonstration boat was not only to build it in the very

striking stand-out blue colour, but to fit it with a pair of bomber motors on the transom that really make a statement. So two 115 Mercury Optimax outboards take pride of place. And how awesome they look! 





The Ace Glider has four-in-line cylinder Optimax motors that produced 1526 cc each – ideally suited for tricky waters like KwaZulu-Natal where boats run hard at the back line.

Fitted with stainless steel three blade 13 x 18 pitch propellers I couldn't wait to try her out. A change from the original review, was to fit the controls from a side mount to binnacle mount on the dash, on the right side of the steering. This placement is so much better and more convenient.

These four-in-line cylinder Optimax motors are super-quiet and starting them up one immediately feels the surge of power. (The additional weight of these 115's compared with the original 75 motors tested seemed to make little difference – the boat does not sit any deeper in the water). They produced 1526cc each, and had no shortage of power to run hard at the back line – ideal at Cape Vidal or Sodwana – where wave patterns can be tricky.

Handling

The light north-easterly wind became progressively stronger as the afternoon wore on. There was quite a chop but the 530 Ace Glider has not got its name for nothing. She really performed

superbly and running directly into the chop did produce some side spray but the passengers up front didn't get a fleck of water on them. Of course, appropriate handling of the controls can make a difference too, between a hard or comfortable dry ride.

Dean Levy really had fun as I made him go into the backline off Durban's North Beach to do some wave jumping so that I could get some good action photos. The more confident he got, the higher out the water he jumped, with abundant use of the throttles. It was an impressive performance – much like a dolphin having fun!

Cornering was excellent and the response of the craft extremely solid.



Hard turns produced no hint of cavitation. It can't be over-emphasised, that while it's nice to have the power of the twin 115's, it is by no means necessary. Twin 75's or 90's would be quite adequate.

Conclusion

There is often a ski boater buyer who tries to opt for something bigger and better than their neighbour or club member, and bless them, as they contribute to the variety of ski boat option sizes on the market. The Ace Glider comes in at a very important size at 5.30 metres with a 2.30m beam, and depending on engine options, it need not stretch the budget unduly. This is significantly more than an entry-level ski boat!

A final point is that we towed her with a Mazda 2.5-litre turbodiesel. She towed just fine on the 15-inch tyre designer trailer (galvanised).

Look out for this demonstrator model – you may not want to wait to have one built – and she looks and performs so well.

For more information on the 530 Ace Glider, contact Dean Levy at Boating International on (011) 452 8280 or visit www.boatinginternational.co.za. ■

At a glance



LOA	5.30 m
Beam	2.30 m
Draft	400 mm
Engines	Twin 75 to 115HP
Max persons	5 – offshore requirements
Fuel capacity	8 jerry cans (200 litres) long hatches 4 jerry cans (100 litres) coffin hatch