

AquaTrax F15X

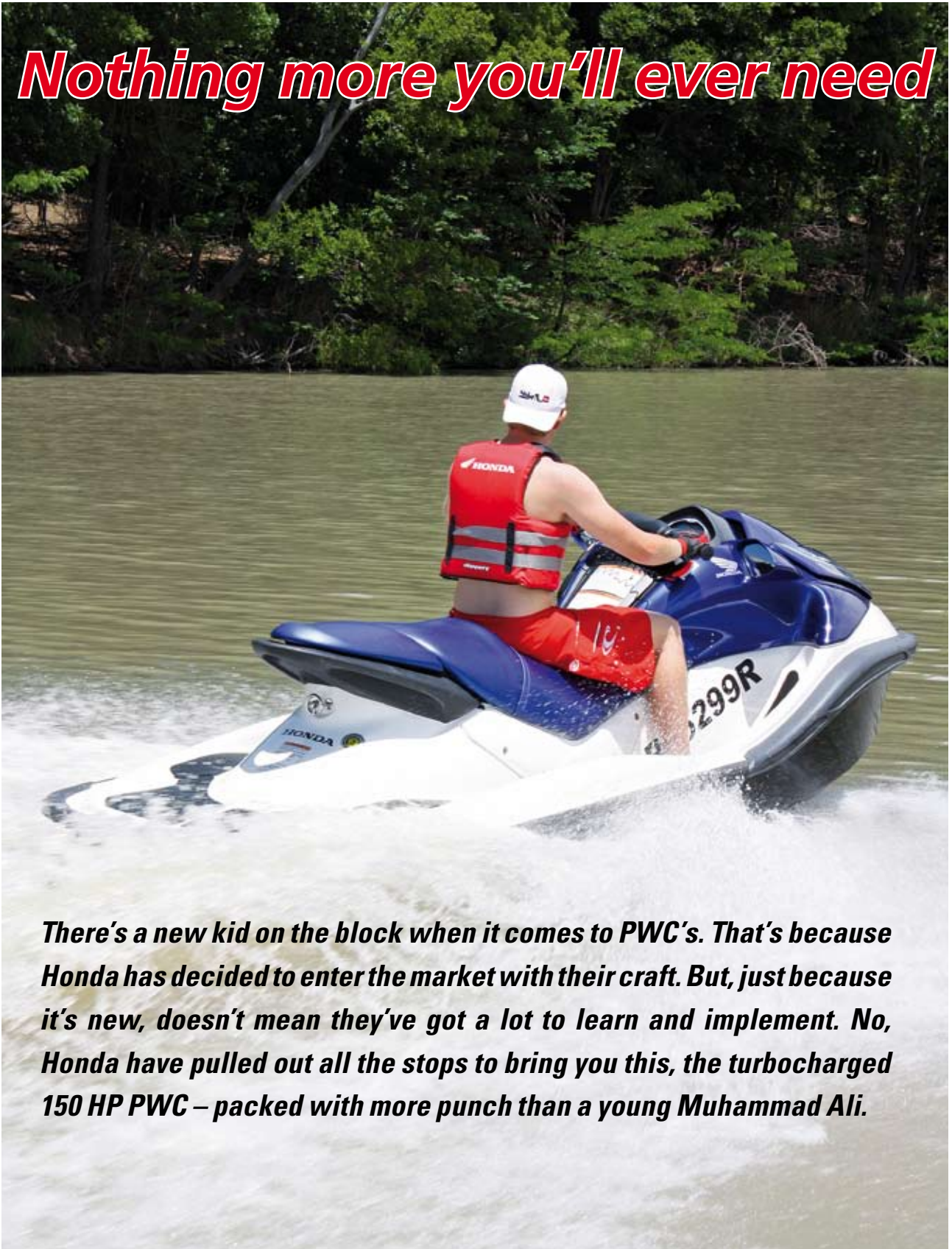
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There's a new kid on the block when it comes to PWC's. That's because Honda has decided to enter the market with their craft. But, just because it's new, doesn't mean they've got a lot to learn and implement. No, Honda have pulled out all the stops to bring you this, the turbocharged 150 HP PWC – packed with more punch than a young Muhammad Ali.



A lot of time and effort has gone into the ergonomics of the Honda F15X to ensure it's not only functional, but also practical.

Is it back to the drawing boards to design a proper PWC, or has Honda hit the nail on the head? The Editor travels to the Vaal River in JHB to find out.

Conditions

When you think of cruising on a PWC (Personal Water Craft), you imagine the wind whistling through your hair as you skip over the water's surface at Florida

Keys and the sun bearing down to give you a golden brown tan. This however, wasn't the conditions that greeted me when I arrived for a day of fun while meeting with Honda Marine at the Vaal River in Vereeniging. Even though there wasn't a chance for me to look as though I belonged in a music video for a famous rapper, the Honda 1500 Supercharged PWC still caught my eye and come rain hail or snow, I was going to get a ride.



A raised rubber bump emphasises the line and shape of the Honda F15X and is helpful when parking next to jetties and boats.

Trailer

This 1500 PWC was towed to our spot of choice on a dual trailer. PWC's weigh little more than your average family dog, and with two on a trailer, towed by a 2.5-litre diesel bakkie, you'd be easily mistaken for forgetting that they're even there (except for the gorgeous view you get from your rear-view mirror!).

A single PWC trailer can be bought instead of a dual version if you have plans to purchase just one. Either way, you're getting a pretty heavy-duty, galvanised trailer, built to support the hull 100% and facilitate easy loading and off-loading of the craft.

Deck layout

You can see that a lot of time and effort has gone into designing the craft layout to ensure it's not only functional, but practical too. Arguably, this makes the Honda F15X one of the most ergonomic crafts on the market today.

Rider dynamics have been taken into account to allow you to sit at a comfortable distance from the handlebars, while maintaining a clear view of the instrument panel as well as what's in the water immediately in front of you, to prevent bumping

into jetties unnecessarily, or even riding into partially sunk flotsam, or running aground.

There's ample seating and foot space for three adult passengers, something I did try. Plus, there's more than enough grunt in the engine to still pull a wake skater. There's a material handle on the seat for a second passenger to hold onto, and a built-in handle at the stern of the seat for the third passenger, if holding each other around the waist isn't something you want to be seen doing in public!

The instrument panel has been well placed to maximise visibility for the rider's line of sight. You can clearly see all of your craft's settings and speed, without it being in the way of your forward vision. On the panel, you get an all-digital, easy-to-read and understand, set of gauges for fuel, speed, amount of rev's, warning lights and more. A report also shows an amount of riding time left, based on amount of fuel at your current speed.

The instrument panel can also be easily lifted to reveal a huge, watertight storage area for towels, cameras, cell phones, and more.

On either side of the craft, two rear-view mirrors complete the bow section for a clear view of what's going on behind you. Good thing this, since you're probably going to be in front of your buddies most of the time!

At the stern, a comfortable, non-slip, spongy type of material has been used to keep your feet snugly in place, and prevent scratching the craft if you're putting a wakeboard on for a quick session. Should you be boarding from the water, a bar on the stern of the craft can be lowered slightly to aid you. This lifts up after use automatically.

A raised rubber bump rail has been placed around the craft, and emphasises the lines and shape, rather than detracting from it. It's slightly thicker than you'd think you need, but you'll be thankful you have it when you park next to jetties and boats! Also, because of its size, the guard keeps any



Rider dynamics have been taken into account, allowing you to sit a comfortable distance from the handlebars with a good view of the gauges and surroundings.



At the stern, a comfortable, non-slip spongy type of material has been used to keep your feet snugly in place and prevent other equipment from scratching the PWC.

fine spray from catching the wind and blowing onto you.

Engine

Honda has packed this PWC with a four cylinder, 1 470 cm³ marine engine and added a turbocharger to it. The way a PWC works is to continuously have water flowing through the pump. Maximum water in the pump, means maximum water out of the pump, and therefore maximum performance. The intake grate under the craft has been

designed so as to almost 'top-load' the pump. So, the faster you go, the faster water is fed into the system, and so the faster you go. It's basically the recipe for breaking the speed of light!

The engine has got more than enough grunt to get you onto the plane in a flash. I was unable to time it since I had to have both hands on the handle bars to overcome the pull-off.

With this craft, being brand new and on the Reef, in a river, I was able to get a top speed of 106 km/h according to



to my GPS. This really is something you could write a letter home about!

The built-in fuel tank is able to hold 70-litres of fuel. This already sounds like hours of fun – but since Honda is renowned for their fuel efficiency, you'll get many more hours of enjoyment on a tankful than you might expect!



Setting a speed control allows riders to maintain a set speed and thus concentrate on surroundings, while the reverse gear gets you out of trouble.

Handling

You'd think that a PWC is just a PWC. They all turn on a dime, and all can accelerate quickly. Not true. It's the way that the craft is able to hold you in the corner without spinning out, while putting the power down. Even if the corner happens to be as big as a coin!

Zooming left, dodging right, and going for top speed runs, I was able to ride the craft for endless hours without feeling exhausted. And, having tried my best to get myself into a situation where I would be in trouble or flung off, it just never happened.

Riding around in tight circles, the waves in the middle got bigger and bigger. A quick bolt away and a run up for a jump would surely see me coming up from the water with a big freshwater Barbel in my mouth. I was willing to try since I'm that committed to knowing if a craft is safe for you and your family! But, as predicted, I managed to launch into the air slightly and land back down with hardly as much as a thud. I will admit that I've already driven the craft in the ocean, and know what its capabilities are.

Three great features that make the craft rider friendly, especially if you're a beginner, is the option to use a safe key, set a speed control, and have reverse. A safe key will only allow the PWC to get to a certain speed before cutting the power. Setting a speed control allows riders to maintain a set speed and then concentrate on the surroundings, while reverse gear lets you get out of trouble and away from obstructions, should that be necessary.

Conclusion

The Aquatrax 15X is a beautiful craft, built for rider pleasure. It's simply brilliant no matter the use, be it, pleasure, cruising, fishing, water activities, or more – for adults and kids.

It's safe and reliable as Honda's are much renowned, but I'd have to say that the best part is actually the price.

For more information, contact Honda Knysna on (044) 382 4090 or email hondamarine@knysna.sa.com

At a glance

LOA	339.9 cm
Beam	124.5 cm
Rated HP	197.3 HP
Storage capacity	87 litres
Kerb weight	433 kg