

Classic

170

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Last August we featured the Honda Marine's Latitude 190 – a bow rider that offers the family boater all the benefits of an all-rounder without having to break the bank to own one. Honda's Mallards-built Classic 170 offers the same idea in a slightly smaller package – perfect for the boater looking for a compact entry- to mid-level craft. Equipped with a powerful Honda BF90 outboard, a roomy interior and stylish looks, the Classic 170 is deserving of more than just a passing glance.

Leisure Boating takes a trip along the coast to Knysna, to review Honda Marine's Classic 170.


Mallards Magic

Durban-based Mallards Marine is justifiably considered one of the country's leading manufacturers of ski- and speedboats. Since 1989, Mallards have been creating quality crafts like the Classic, Classic, Sundowner, Concept and Cobra Cat range, making them one of the most prolific boat-builders in South Africa.

The father and son team of Geoff and Mike Barnes started the business in an empty factory in College Lane in Durban. It was here that the first of the Classic 170 boats were designed and made. By the time Mallards moved to their current Pinetown premises they were just about bursting at the seams.

Today, business is still strong and despite merging with other local dealerships and then separating themselves, they've still retained their knack for building some of the best quality crafts and versatile ski-boats currently available on the market.

Conditions for test

The Knysna Lagoon is arguably one of the most picturesque boating destinations along our eastern coastline. It's a haven for speed-boaters, water-skiers, fishermen, tourists and nature lovers alike. The magnificent Knysna Heads provided a spectacular backdrop for our review. 



Measuring in at 5.18m, the Classic 170 features sleek contours, funky graphics, a roomy interior and that distinctive Mallards shape.

Knysna's scorching sun takes some getting use too. At regular intervals, we slapped on the sunscreen as the near 30°C temperature cooked our skin like a braai choppie.

But thanks to a mild westerly breeze (22 knots), we experienced a balmy day out on the water. The breeze also brought about some white horses on the surface, allowing us to thoroughly test the capabilities of the Classic 170.

General Impression

All things considered, the Classic 170 is a bow rider that offers great value and an excellent return on investment – if having heaps of fun is the currency in which you trade.

At first glance, the Classic 170 is a good-looking little craft with sleek-looking contours, finishing and a distinctive Mallard's sharp-nose shape. And apart from her beautiful black hull and funky graphics, she retains that classic speedboat look that's bound to turn a few heads while on the water.

She's not a particularly big craft – measuring 17-ft (5.18m) in length. However, with a wide beam of 2.12m, she manufactured with the intent to

accommodate plenty of passengers, and even the family pet.

The Classic 170 is not only an excellent proposition for entry-level boaters, while the solid hull and quality finishes are built on the justly founded legacy of Mallards Boating's high standards and manufacturing ability.

Deck Layout

The Classic 170 offers an unexpected amount of interior space. Thanks to a charitable sized U-shaped stern bench, she is able to seat up to nine people, although for maximum comfort I'd probably stick with no more than seven passengers.

The remainder of the seating setup comprises the typical runabout bow area which comes complete with a filler cushion for sunbathing, as well as separate twin seats with ample legroom for skipper and assistant.

An unobtrusive walkthrough windscreen provides basic shelter from





The helm houses analogue instrumentation, putting a wealth of information at your fingertips.

the wind and separates the bow from the main cockpit. The craft's helm station houses analogue instrumentation, keeping you informed as to mph, rpm, volts, fuel and trim, as well as a switch panel for controls to both anchor and running lights.

The Classic's non-skid deck has been designed to avoid the blinding glare that white boats tend to give off. Instead of the conventional cream colour, the interior area has been done out in a rather retro grey and white which, coupled with black and white piped upholstery, gives a smart look and feel to the interior.

Motor and controls

I found the Classic 170's rigging to be spot on, with overall power-to-weight ratio virtually impossible to fault. In other words the Honda BF90 is in a class of its own. This outboard is a totally different block, using a 1 496 cc engine with a bore of 73 mm, stroke of 89.4 mm and a compression ratio of

9:1. And the BF90's styled gearcase adds the finishing touches to the entire silent-running, modern package.

The valve train is run by a single overhead camshaft with around 100 cc less displacement than the older model. This overhead camshaft uses a variable valve timing system (V-TEC) to open up when asked and allow more air out and fuel into the combustion chamber for increased acceleration.

Engine dry weight has been reduced by approximately six kilograms (from 169 kg to about 163 kg) making it one of the lightest 90 HP outboards in its class. Other technology includes electronic fuel-injection and a lean-burn system for economical fuel consumption.

Our review craft's engine was fitted with a 17" propeller, and she planed in less than three seconds without any unnecessary bow rearing. ➤





Built to thrive on speed, the craft's semi-deep V hull handled the choppy surface with the greatest of ease.

We managed a top speed of 78 km/h @ 6 200 rpm, which seems more than adequate for family boating.

Handling

A semi-deep V hull (450 kg) means that the Classic 170 handles well in choppier conditions without losing too much stability while at rest. The hull is built to thrive on speed, it seems. She's also designed for a smooth ride and good cornering stability.

Designed to deflect all water spray away from the boat, and thanks to her highgunnels, westayedabsolutely100% dry while on board. The high gunnels are an excellent safety precaution for the kids, making it suitable for family use.

The Classic 170 is primarily designed for cruising on dams or more placid waters. But she seemed equally at home speeding across the often rugged Knysna Lagoon. Apart from her crisp turning ability, she also mastered the choppy surface with ease.

Finishing touches

Standard features on the Classic 170 include an aluminium-framed windscreen that offers sufficient protection against the elements. And with enough stainless steel grab handles in the bow area, you can hold on comfortably while speeding across the surface or doing a couple of sharp turns.

The amount of storage room is more than adequate. There is a deep below-deck ski storage hatch and dry storage under the bow seat, while the rear seat provides wet storage space.

The skipper and co-pilot can each enjoy a comfortable, moulded, swivel chair and the helm area is equipped with an instrumentation panel sporting a classy finish. The co-pilot dashboard features a nifty, lockable cubby hole for storing all your valuables.

Other standard features include guide poles, battery box and fittings, navigational lights, hydraulic steering boat cover and a fold-away canopy when the sun becomes just a little too uncomfortable. Optional extras include a CD/radio player with four speakers, ski racks, speakers and spotlights for wake tower.

Conclusion

This sleek and practical boat, with high gunnels and an impeccable smooth ride is ideal for the whole family. Your friends will be most grateful for the fun-injection this champion bow rider provides. It's more than your classic bow rider – fun, speed and safety guaranteed!

While cruising on the Classic 170, you surely won't be blamed for feeling like a celebrity as heads are bound to turn and cameras are sure to flash while out on the water. Be the envy of all your friends this summer and get cruising with the Classic 170 – she's the ultimate family bow rider.

For more information on the Classic 170, contact the principal dealer of Honda Marine Knysna, Dave Hoets on (044) 382 4090. Alternatively, visit www.hondamarineknysna.com.



At a glance

LOA:	17-ft (5.81 m)
Beam:	6.95-ft (2.12 m)
Engines:	Honda BF90 4-Stroke
Max	Passengers: 7
Fuel Capacity:	90-litre
Top Speed:	78 km/h @ 6 200 rpm