

HONDA MARINE & D7 BOATING

Ski boating made easy

Honda Marine is back in a big way and what better way to announce this than showing what their outboards can do in the big blue ocean. LESHZEK LOTZE goes to Sodwana to investigate Honda's return and their partnership with D7 Boating.

They say that there are two kinds of skippers, those who have flipped a boat and those who are going to flip a boat. Luckily there was no flipping of crafts on this trip to Sodwana thanks to genius boat design, superb skippers, Honda power and the perfect day we had.

The amount of days like this can be counted on one hand throughout the year so we were really blessed.

Honda Marine wanted to introduce their line-up of ski boat packages to the press and Honda Marine's return to the deep-sea angler. It was also a good chance to educate the press and introduce Honda's future dealers.

Honda had come out with the big guns on this trip.

From Falcon inflatable there were two crafts; the 575 rib and the 650 rib. On the ski boat side of things, D7 Boating brought four of their crafts from the Unique range all rigged with Honda controls and outboards. D7 Boating has shown their support towards Honda for a long time and were Honda Marine agents in the old Midmacor distribution days prior to Honda SA's establishment.

They have maintained their support and service of Honda outboards sold over the last eight to nine years.

Because there were so many boats, I thought I would report on them in instalments, starting with the Unique 680. This model, called the Laksman, was fitted with two 150 Hp Honda outboards and provided a really stable dry ride. **L**

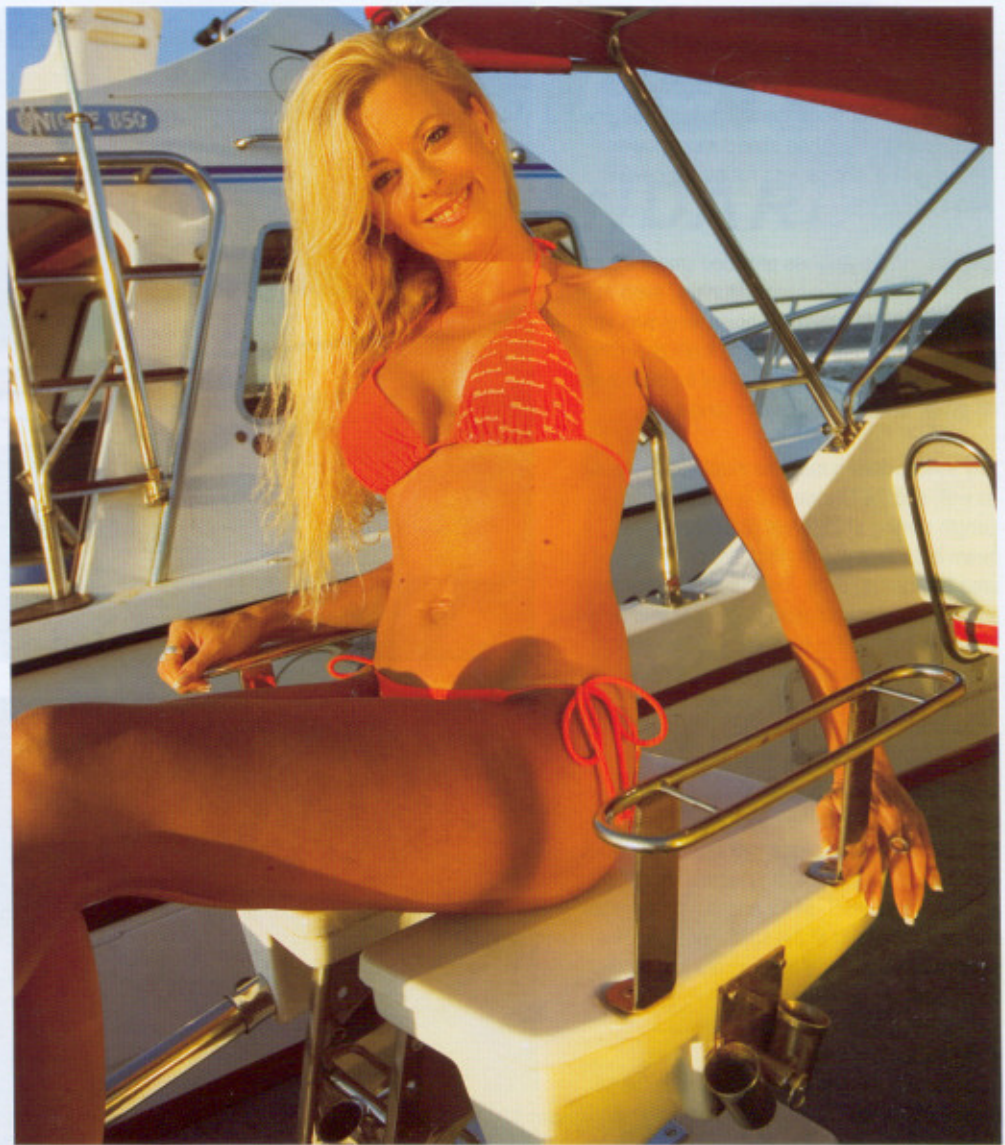


The Laksman was probably my favourite out of the ski boats, because of the layout and combination of the hull and engines. D7 Boating has created a hull unlike any other; the configuration of this hull consists of a single sharp bow nose centre pontoon which fades away into a tunnel about one third to halfway of the boat length, and with two pontoons like in a normal two pontoon catamaran configuration, to start or emerge in the hull about one quarter from the front of the boat to continue up to the rear end.

The combination of the Deep V and catamaran allowed the boat to cut chop superbly and provide excellent flow, which creates less resistance and improves fuel efficiency. The design lends buoyancy and lift to the boat-hull and when planing, the boat effectively runs on the two side pontoons, and only occasionally 'bumps' the centre pontoon of the nose section or bow on the water.

The hull is made from a fusion moulding and is 50 percent lighter and has over 100 percent buoyancy. On the ride out it was clear that this design greatly reduces porpoising, rolling or broaching of the boat in swells and the surf.

Fitted to the transom were two 150 Hp motors, which complimented the Laksman perfectly. The BF 150 Hp motor has a VTEC, 16-valve, four-cylinder power plant with a displacement of 2 354 cc and a 110 kW of power. This together with Honda's exclusive Lean Burn Feedback, which automatically adjusts the air/fuel mix according to speed and load to maximize fuel efficiency, you get an engine that delivers more power with less fuel.



And to insure long-term durability, Honda engineers designed a Three Way Cooling System. The cylinder head runs slightly cooler than the cylinder block, greatly reducing engine wear. From this you can expect more power, less refuelling, and far less maintenance over the years.

The two 150 Hp engines provided smooth, quiet power throughout the range. Running them at a comfortable 4 000 rpm, the noise level was very low and the speed at around 40 km/h providing a silky ride. Push throttles forward for instant roll on power at any speed or rpm range.

Any serious fishing machine must be functional as well, and the Unique 680 is exactly that. Length coming at 22.3 feet (6.8 m) and the beam is 8.2 feet (2.5 m) for a spacious cockpit area and casting deck. The console is forward and houses plenty of storage compartments. The helm has Honda Marine instrumentation and underfoot you will find marine grade carpeting.

The gunnels are nice and high and moving towards the console are stainless steel grab rails that form part of the canopy overhead. Both captaining and passenger seats are swivel and there is a stern boarding ladder. In the bow are a stainless steel rail for added safety and an anchor locker. With all the space and practicality you will feel like you are in a much larger boat.

If you are looking for a real xtreme fishing machine with everyday boating features the Unique 680 is the craft for you, especially with Honda engines powering it forward. You'll never look back again, expect to see what just bit.

