

# EXCEEDING *EXPECTATIONS*

BY MATHEW HEWETSON

PHOTOS PAUL C SCHRADER & MATHEW HEWETSON

Over the past several years, I have become an admirer of centre console boats and for the fishing abilities they provide. Long considered by many boaties as a “nice to have boat,” centre consoles were often dismissed by Kiwi anglers who preferred a hard top trailer boat to help keep them out of the weather and dry when on the water if conditions changed.

Oceanpro's latest centre console featuring a new design with a 55-degree entry hull and it looks great with taper at the bow.



The pontoon centre console is built strong with 4mm hull and frames, with 1310L of reserve buoyancy.

understand that, but the real appeal and advantages of fishing from centre consoles has helped change buyer decisions and drive the explosion of console models now available.

New Zealand boat builders are continuing to design and develop new centre consoles in this incredibly competitive market. Most Kiwi boat builders now have at least one model of either centre or side console in their line-up, and they tend to be in the smaller 4-5m class, but with a growing demand for console boats, the models have grown larger to include boats from 5-6.5m for going further offshore.

One such builder is Pauanui based Oceanpro who started out with a 4.5m centre console and then 4.6m EVO model which really impressed this writer. So, I was really interested in what designer and owner Mike Bush could achieve with a larger console.

### NEW HULL DESIGN

Mike had informed me in mid-2024 that he had a new design for a 535-centre console that would be a big step up for the Oceanpro range. Mike wanted something with even more internal space and the deck area would be nearly 50% larger than the previous 460 EVO, as this model provides an expansive fishing platform.

The extra space, coupled with the new 55-degree entry

hull, borrowed from their successful 530 hardtop, would give a lot more internal beam, and really accommodate 3-4 anglers. The 535 would maintain Oceanpro's signature shear line while utilising their new tapered pontoon design.

These pontoons help by elevating the hull plate at the bow for better handling in rough sea conditions and boost the reserve buoyancy compared to the previous design. Mike built the first 535 as a company demonstrator and ready for the Boat, Fish and Dive Show held in the Waikato in early September.

It was there that I got to view the new boat first hand, and it really looked stunning on display at the show. It attracted many admirers who wanted to know all about the centre console with many comments stating it was the best looking and decked out console at the show.

I was eager to take it out on the water and in spring Mike let me collect it to head away in early November to the Far North to use it over a few days, fishing for a memorial trophy with good mates that we hold every year.

We were based at Rangiputa for three days but unfortunately only got in one and a half days fishing as the wind was up, gusting 30 knots and we couldn't get out to the better spots. The usually dependable harbour fishing was also slow, so it made for one of our toughest trips to Rangiputa yet.

However, the new 535 impressed in the challenging conditions and the guys on board gave glowing praise about the dry hull, stableness, sea handling and the large space up front and in the cockpit for fishing. This last point was what I also noticed the most about the difference from the smaller EVO 460, the 535 wasn't even more than a metre longer, but the internal room provided in Mike's innovative design allowed such ample fishing space for three anglers.

With three anglers in the 460 it was a bit tight at times, so the 535 would appeal to a skipper who likes to head out with a couple of crew mates chasing fish. The other appeal was the T-top roof that was on the 535, it did help block the harsh Kiwi sun when out all-day fishing and welcomed by our crew.

### GAME FISHING TRIP

After returning the boat to Mike, we made plans to take the 535 out off Tairua in January and troll for tuna as the yellowfin were back in great numbers. Mike called me in mid-Jan to say a mate had landed a nice 40kg+ tuna in only 70m off Tairua, so I quickly packed up and drove up early the next day to launch off Pauanui with Mike.

Heading out over the bar and Mike confessed he hadn't caught a fish in the boat yet! He had of course been out cruising in it but had been too busy over the summer break to get any fishing done, and the constant wind hadn't helped either.

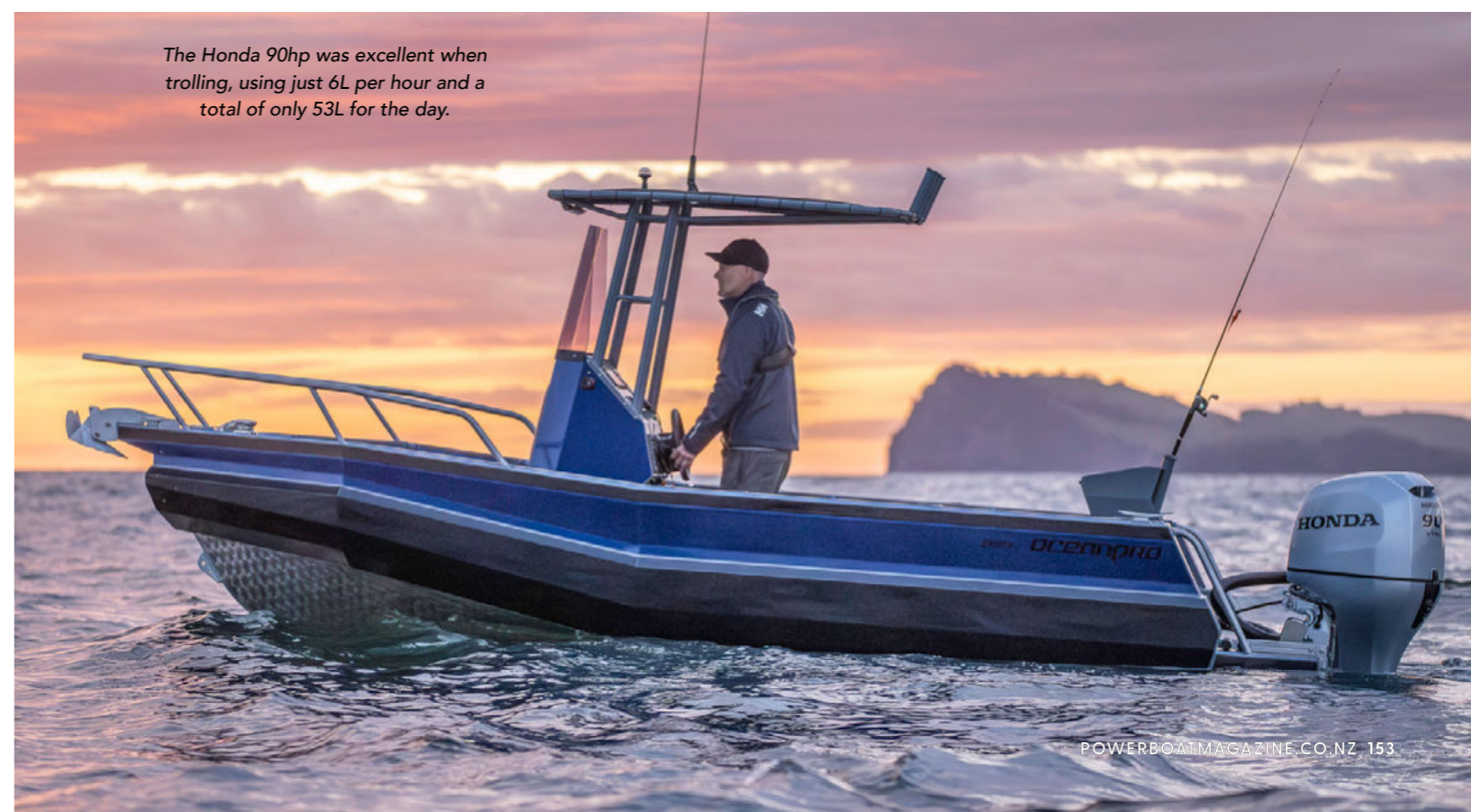
We started trolling and only been on the water a few hours when we sent over a pin at 78m near the Aldermen's when the lumo lure got hit hard. The line was going out at a fast rate as we cleared the gear, grabbed the rod, and started to play the fish. I told Mike it must be a big tuna but unfortunately the hook pulled a minute later. Checking the leader and the new line had the tell-tale bill rash from a marlin! Well Mike we almost had a marlin on your first fishing trip in the 535 as we laughed from the excitement.



The T-top offers much needed shade when fishing in scorching summer conditions.

Trolling off Tairua for tuna in January in the Oceanpro 535 centre console.

The Honda 90hp was excellent when trolling, using just 6L per hour and a total of only 53L for the day.





**SPECIFICATIONS**

535 Centre Console  
 Length Overall 5.42m  
 Beam Overall 2.15m  
 Beam Internal 1.53m  
 17-deg deadrise at transom  
 4mm hull and frames, 3mm top sides  
 Power 70-100HP  
 1310L reserve buoyancy  
 Hull weight with outboard and fuel 720kg  
**OCEANPRO.CO.NZ**

**PERFORMANCE DATA**

RPM	KNOTS	L/H	L/NM	RANGE
650	2.5	0.9	0.360	180
1000	3.0	1.8	0.600	110
1500	4.9	2.4	0.490	130
2000	6.1	5.1	0.840	80
2500	7.9	6.9	0.880	76
3000	11.0	7.8	0.710	95
3500	15.9	9.3	0.590	110
4000	20.3	14.4	0.710	95
4500	24.3	17.7	0.730	92
5000	28.9	22.5	0.780	86
5500	32.1	28.2	0.880	76
6050	35.5	36.9	1.100	61

Left: U-DEK is used extensively throughout the boat and is a practical choice which looks great in grey/blue.

The new 535 centre console is a good-looking fishing boat that impressed on the water.

Boat builder Mike Bush was happy to get out on the water fishing in his new boat for the first time when a marlin hit the port lure.

The higher sides and gunnels make things comfortable for anglers.

The up front casting platform is superb for anglers looking to fish off.



We continued trolling and saw jumping yellowfin in front of the boat but unfortunately, they didn't hit our lures. The conditions were stunning out on the water and when trolling the Honda 90hp used only 6L/per hour! With a total of 53L for 116km of trolling over the course of the day. That is outstanding fuel usage for a day chasing game fish.

Overall, the new 535 centre console is a quality pontoon boat which provides excellent stability when at rest and boat handling, with a soft riding and dry hull, which would appeal to the serious fisher.

The price as tested fitted with T-top, U-DEK, painted hull with vinyl decal, Honda 90hp and on a DMW single axel trailer sells for \$82,000 (plus electronics). Alternatively, a base model without the T-top, or painted hull / vinyl decal and with the Honda 75hp would start from \$54,000. ☼