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By Peter Scott

 It is probably hard to believe that one of the best fishing rigs we have seen this year is actually built as a sports cruiser. But let me clarify that fact. Here we are talking about a PowerCat Sports Cruiser - a genuine blue water performer with all the comforts of home and superbly adaptable for fishing in either smooth waters or well offshore as a reef or canyon runner.

Our test boat, the PowerCat 3100 Sports Cruiser had just been sold to an owner on Queensland's Capricorn Coast and had been decked out to not only serve as an offshore fisher but also as a family cruiser and to be honest, the team from PowerCat have created a top class boat that meets both requirements.

These new generation PowerCats are quite unique in their handling and on water characteristics. They are as agile as a mono hull with incredible

performance and acceleration but with the added stability of a catamaran.

Our test day loomed with a cyclone pounding the Queensland coast and even the waters off Moreton Bay had been whipped up like a whirlpool. Despite the somewhat overcast and windy conditions, we decide to give the 3100 Sports Cruiser a run off Brisbane Island. Powered by twin 250 four stroke Suzuki outboards spinning 16 x 21.5 pitch props and fitted with foils, the PowerCat 3100 is a true rocket ship. Into a stiffening south-easter and around one metre of chop, the 3100 was quickly onto the plane, no noticeable nose lift - just smooth acceleration and in the blink of an eye we are running flat and on top of the short chop at 50mph with the tachos showing a comfortable 4500 rpm.

These conditions are not ideal and I was expecting a good deal of hull thumping

and a fair bit of spray but as we cruised down Brisbane Passage, we experienced neither. This 3100 Sports Cruiser with its reverse chines and superbly designed hull is just eating up the miles - no spray and no hull thumping. The lift and buoyancy is impressive.

I was equally impressed with the big Suzuki four strokes. They are (and this is a big call) possibly the quietest outboards I have tested and the performance is exhilarating. The cable controls are so smooth that you could easily mistake them for electronic shifts and the mid mounted trim switch on the main throttle box which allows you to trim each engine individually or synchronised is extremely useful. The 250hp outboards are mounted on a pod with an extended, curved transom housing a swim ladder and hatch providing easy access to the battery compartment. The extended transom

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PowerCat 3100

has also allowed PowerCat to position Racor fuel filters in easily accessible positions either side of the pod. A transom door is centrally located to provide easy access to the swim ladder. A transom shower and deck wash is also standard equipment.

Backing up into the swell we experienced on the day of our test did cause water to rush into the cockpit but the well drained deck area quickly dispersed the water outside the boat. Certainly a reassuring aspect when offshore.

The PowerCat 3100 Sports Cruiser is well badged. It definitely has sports like handling and performance with all the capabilities of a coastal cruiser and offshore fisher. The proud new owner of this classy cruiser is a keen fisherman who loves family cruising and as a result, he had the boat fitted out as a dual purpose model for both fishing and cruising.



The 3100 has high gunwales and padded side coamings which suit sports fishing while the removable aft cockpit lounge and convertible dinette lounge provide two additional double bunks for those overnight and extended stays. In fishing mode, the rear lounge is removed to achieve a spacious deck area with two under deck lockers with pump outs and a live bait tank plumbed into the portside transom.

The portside L-shaped lounge housing extends aft which has allowed for the inclusion of two moulded fender baskets as well as an ice box concealed in the shoulder of the lounge. On the starboard side behind the helm seat is a utility bar with stainless steel sink, mixer tap and alcohol stove under a granicote benchtop with riddle rail.

The 3100 Sports Cruiser is also fitted with an 1800 watt inverter which

provides 240 volt power. Twin double pole protected GPOs are located in a cabinet below the sink. The utility bar also houses a 59 litre Engel fridge and a fold out cutlery drawer. A microwave has been concealed in a forward locker on the cabin bulkhead with twin storage compartments below. Above the microwave compartment, a moulded shelf, complete with grab rail, houses a radio and DVD, flat screen TV jacks and also a battery monitor.

Substantial commonsense and experience has been responsible for the layout and design of this boat. Good examples of this are the placement of a fire extinguisher and EPIRB in the lower section of the helm seat. Both have been recessed into storage cubicles providing for easy access if needed.

The cockpit is open plan in design and despite such inclusions as an aft and



portside lounge, removable dinette table and utility bar, the entire deck area is quite spacious and practical in layout.

The helm of the PowerCat 3100 is amongst the best I have seen. PowerCat have clearly recognised that most modern cruisers have an array of space consuming navigational equipment and fish finders. Many boat manufacturers don't take this into account when designing dash boards and as a consequence, there is often little space to mount large screens and controls.

The PowerCat dash is absolutely first class. The analogue engine gauges are mounted at eye level below the brow of the dash. A Navman 4600 Fish finder and a Navman Tracker 5600 have been installed on either side of a large flat panel in the dash, separated by a Ritchie Angler compass. The sports steering wheel, although fixed, is nicely positioned and ably assisted by hydraulic steering, and it is just three turns from lock to lock.

A VHF radio has been installed below the fishfinder, while on the starboard side of the dash is a series of rocker switches which control the various systems from bilge pumps to electrics.

A Maxwell winch control is mounted forward of the twin throttles and useful storage lockers have been built into the side of the hull and below the helm bolster.

As a general principle, cats suffer in the forward area accommodation because of the twin hull design. However, PowerCat have been able to provide exceptional accommodation space forward as well as a full height shower and toilet cubicle forward of the helm.

In both cases full head height has been achieved by setting steps down into each hull. The forward cabin is monstrous in size with a king size bed running thwart ships. An overhead hatch provides adequate natural light and ventilation. A fan has been mounted on



the cabin bulkhead while adjustable reading lights and side pockets have been located on the starboard side of the cabin.

There is even a hanging cabinet and a comfortable portside lounge seat with a forward storage locker extending into the bow. The cabin is fully lined with soft grey carpet and an overhead hatch secures the portside entry.

The shower and toilet cubicle is again a clever use of space with a moulded granitoc vanity with sink and built-in soap container. The cubicle has an overhead exhaust fan, a retractable shower hose and electric toilet complete with macerator and holding tank. An overhead hatch provides access to the dash wiring allowing maintenance.

Most importantly, for all weather operation, the 3100 is a hard top and a stylish one at that. The cruiser comes complete with clear and covers while the acrylic tinted windshield is secured





in place by the use of twin stainless steel rails.

The 3100 is a boat which has so many features which make onboard living much more enjoyable. Removable heavy duty marine carpet throughout the cockpit, well placed low level cockpit lighting and no less than four marine grade speakers provide virtual surround sound.

Add to that impressive list, a factory installed heat exchanger which runs off the Suzuki outboards to provide hot water to the 35 litre hot water system, two x 90 watt solar panels mounted in the roof, 120 litres of fresh water and four batteries including two large deep cycle house batteries, the PowerCat 3100 Sports Cruiser is exceptionally well appointed. I must not forget the quality stainless safety rails, the eight rack rocket launcher mounted above the targa arch and of course, the recessed cleats on the side decks.



But it doesn't stop there. I have to congratulate PowerCat for the provision of 100 metres of ground tackle - it is the first boat that I have tested for some time that has taken anchoring seriously and provided ample anchor chain and line to secure the boat in almost any anchorage and weather conditions.

In terms of performance, this 3100 Sports Cruiser is as safe and sure footed as I have driven. It has tremendous lift and the exceptional power provided by the four stroke Suzukis makes this cat a go anywhere boat. It doesn't drag its stern, it runs high, flat and dry and even when thrown into a tight turn at full throttle, the boat didn't skid or cavitate.

Clearly PowerCat have backed the seaworthiness of the cruiser by offering a five (5) year structural hull warranty and a 12 month limited warranty on fixtures and fittings.

I have been on a few cats before but none that performed like the 3100. It is

an exceptional boat and one that clearly has been designed for the best of both worlds - fishing and cruising. While the boat has a high level of fitout in its standard mode, you can option up the 3100 to include 24 volt DC air-conditioning and a full length hardtop.

The PowerCat 3100 can cruise comfortably at 3,000rpm running at 25mph SOG or push the throttles fully forward for a tremendous adrenalin rush and at wide open throttle (6,000 rpm) this sports cruiser achieved 63 mph in conditions not conducive to good boating.

It is hard to say that a boat is perfect, but in the case of this superbly engineered and built PowerCat, perhaps a better term would be *purrr-fect!*



Specifications:

LOA	9.75 metres (31ft 8")
Beam	2.88 metres (9ft 5")
Draft	.7 metre
Displacement	2,800 kg
Accommodation	6 people
ABP	8 people
Fuel capacity	Twin 240 litre tanks
Fresh water	120 litres
Engines	250 hp Suzuki Four strokes
Standard engines	200 hp Suzuki Two strokes
Warranty	Five (5) years structural hull
Price as tested	\$233,000

Base model starts at \$189,000.

Test boat supplied by PowerCat Marine.

For further information, phone 07 5428 0043

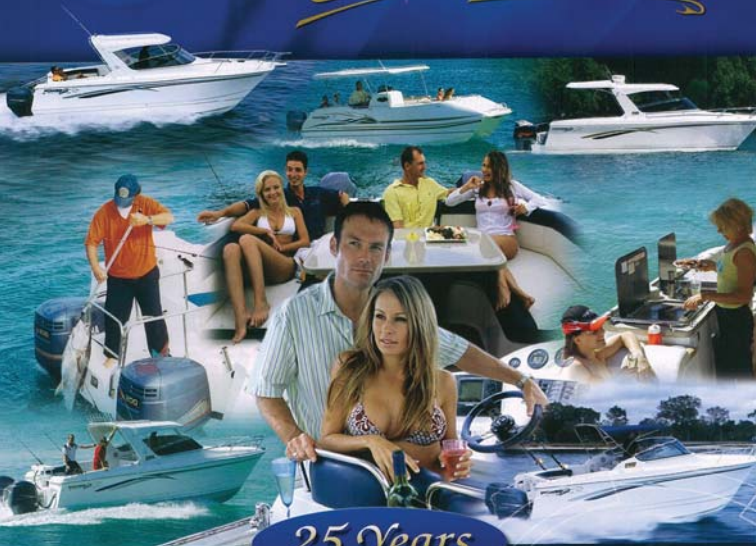
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