

A tough nut to 'crack'

The 16ft Smartwave XL490 is built around a virtually indestructible hull filled with foam. Is this tough little boat any good for angling?

Smartwave boats have hulls described as virtually unsinkable, indestructible and maintenance-free - that's got to be good news.

Built from twin-skinned Polyethylene thermoplastic, with the void filled using a foam system, the range distributed by Marine Revolution offers unrivalled hull thickness that is up to five times stronger than fibreglass. Further, I learnt that the Polyethylene

contains powerful ultra violet stabilisers designed to survive in harsh environments. The hulls are impervious to osmosis, corrosion, rot and rust and have no gel coat or paint to maintain. They are, almost literally, bulletproof.

Clearly such characteristics mean that the Smartwave XL490 Sport is an ideal choice for those who fish in areas where coming into contact with rocks is a risk; most of the marks I routinely fish for bass fall within this category. Likewise, such a tough and durable hull also means these boats are perfect for regularly

launching and retrieving over harsh ground, even if you have to drag it over the shingle to get afloat.

Hull length is 4.9 metres - that's a tad over 16ft - and she sports a decent 2m (6½ft) beam. The bare hull weighs 350kg (770lb), is 12mm thick, is rated for use with outboard engines up to a maximum of 60hp and has been certified as meeting CE category C. Each Smartwave hull comes with a five-year warranty.



TURN OVER
FOR TEST REPORT

Sporty number

At first glance the Smartwave XL490 Sport is indeed a sporty little number, featuring an attractive wrap-around tinted spray screen mounted atop of and aft of a fully enclosed foredeck.

The anchor is stowed in a small locker at the bow, and access to this is either via a hatch located forward of the spray screen or alternatively from an opening section amidships in the spray screen. It not a system I like. If you are 12 stone dripping wet then getting your upper body up through the hatch to work the anchor might be fine for you, but if you are the wrong side of 15 stone it is a tight fit, especially if you are wearing a flotation suit.

The other option, reaching forward from the opening section in the spray screen, is just plain awkward, as it is pretty much at the end of your reach. I was told future models might be adapted to allow walkthrough access from the opening screen section, into the space currently occupied by the foredeck hatch.

The cockpit is spacious enough for a couple of anglers and features a steering console to starboard, two seats for helmsman and crew, seating aft, and several useful dry locker storage boxes. Inboard freeboard is excellent and you also get a couple of spacious underfloor storage lockers, one of which contains an inboard fuel tank.

A touch of comfort is afforded by upholstered seats, while the option to use one of the stern lockers as an aerated livebait well and the inclusion of both a pair of rod holders



The engine sits neatly between two moulded steps

“The boat rose swiftly up on the plane and very quickly achieved a top speed in the region of 30 knots”

along with side rod stowage pockets confirm her designers intended her to be used for angling.

Outboard, the hull is protected fore and aft by rubber fendering, though on this particular boat additional fendering is entirely cosmetic.

I liked the addition of a couple of moulded steps located outboard, one in each quarter either side of a substantial alloy bracket that allows the engine to sit perfectly between these steps. A boarding ladder is available as an optional extra.

At the bow I found a substantial bow eye, which a visit to the Marine Revolution website confirmed is strong enough to suspend the boat from a crane; which would make an interesting option on those days when bad weather prevented a trip.

The test boat had a Bimini top and canvas wrap-around system that creates an enclosed shelter. Regular readers of my reviews will know I am not a fan of such things, and my opinion has not changed. Yes, the quality of workmanship, fit and style of this particular one was good, but I don't think I've ever had a day afloat here in the UK where I've felt the need to take shelter beneath a Bimini top. I simply cannot be doing with zipping and popping sections of canvas to get a bit of shelter, but it is an optional extra so it is your call.

On the water

Once again I reviewed the boat in the vast expanse of open water at Cardiff Bay, following launching at the public slipway on the banks of the River Taff at the Channel View Leisure Centre.

Once clear of the speed restrictions within the river we were able to open the throttle, and I soon noted the boat rose swiftly up on to the plane, and very quickly achieved a top speed in the region of 30 knots.

Handling was excellent with heaps of lateral stability, even when she was thrown into the tightest of turns at high speed. Not once did I detect any cavitation, and even when she was driven hard across the short, choppy waves - Cardiff Bay can get rough - we maintained a smooth and comfortable ride at all times.

While my overall impression of the Smartwave XL490 Sport was good, given the choice and speaking as an angler I would not hesitate in choosing either the centre console version we looked at previously or even the tiller steered open version, both of which would be far more suited to my style of fishing.

If you are looking for something rather sportier in both appearance and performance than an out and out fishing boat, then the Sport might well be the boat for you. **SA**



Clockwise: the forward anchor locker, engine mount, and helm position on the XL490 Sport



Information

For more information on price and options for the Smartwave XL490 Sport or the other models in the range, contact Marine Revolution Ltd:
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